

Horror in Culture & Entertainment

RUE MARQUE



FRIGHT NIGHT

REVISITED AND RE-VAMPED!

INTERVIEWS WITH TINA HOLLAND • CHRIS SARANTON • WILLIAM RAGSDALE • STEPHEN GEDFREYS

PLUS COLIN FARRELL • ANTON YELCHIN • DIRECTOR CHRIS GILLESPIE ON THE REMAKE

TV TERROR GUIDE | **BODY WORLDS** | **FINAL DESTINATION**
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GUT-MUNCHING
APOCALYPSE
PERFECTION."

-Dave Alexander,
Rue Morgue Magazine



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CREATURE

TERROR HAS TEETH

In Theaters Everywhere
SEPTEMBER 9, 2011

MEICHAEL BROOKS, SERINDA STARR, BILLON CASEY, LAUREN SCHNEIDER, ARON HILL, JAMANDA FULLER, FRUIT DIMPUR VINCE, and DANIEL DUNHAM
WRITTEN BY KELLY MARTIN WARDNER, BASED UPON THE FRANCHISE BY KEVIN HASKINS, DIRECTED BY FRED M. ANDREWS, PRODUCED BY JAMES DOUGHERTY, EDITED BY CHRIS CONLEE, EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS MICHAEL CUDDEY, ASSOCIATE PRODUCER MELANIE CHAPMAN, WENDY BRENNAN, BRIAN KSPRINALL, ANTHONY CORE, CO-PRODUCER KERRY ANDREWS, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER PAUL MAXSON, PRODUCED BY SLO SELL AND JON STEINBERG, A FRED M. ANDREWS FILM, WRITTEN BY FRED M. ANDREWS AND TRACY MORSE, DIRECTED BY FRED M. ANDREWS

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NIGHT NEXT DOOR TO HELL

With a remake out this month, we go back to the original bloodsucker-plagued suburbs of 1980's *Fright Night*. Writer/director Tom Holland helps us illustrate how his unlikely hit reinvented the vampire for modern viewers. **PLUS:** Stars Chris Sarandon, William Baskette and Stephen Geoffreys reminisce about the shoot, and Colin Farrell, Anton Yelchin and Craig Gillespie discuss the new remake.

by APRIL SMALL PICO, THOMAS HOLLAND, MONICA S. KUEHLER and DAVE ALTYANDER

IT'S ALL TOWN AFRANCE

After an unsettling series about a tormented town with deep, dark secrets, is just one of the growing army of genre programs invading your TV.

PLUS: A round-up of this season's new and returning horror shows. by MONICA S. KUEHLER, DEVIN TIMMONS, BRENTON BENNETT, PEDRO CABEZAS and DAVE ALTYANDER

FEAR THE REAPER

In anticipation of this month's *Fear (Destination 5)*, we've rounded up the franchise's top ten kills to prove that death never takes a holiday.

by JESSICA KRAMER

32

ANATOMY DIVINE

Body Worlds creator Gunther von Hagens on morbid art, controversial science and facing his own mortality.

by Maja Szary
with photos by Dave Altyander

DEPARTMENTS

UNDERGROUND 6
Vampires and VHS.

LETTERS 7
Letters from fans, readers and weirdos.

NEWS 8
News highlights, horror happenings

THE WORN 12
Weird stats and morbid facts.

THE NORTH COUNTRY 14
Strange trinkets from our boozar of the bizarre.

THE WORN 39
The latest films, the newest DVDs and releases, featuring *Curse of the Faceless Man*.

THE WORN 48
on the: *Sessui*.

BLOOD IN FOUR 50
on the: John Hoen and Fraser Irving's *Xombi*.

THE NORTH COUNTRY 53
on the: John Sharley's *It's Extreme*.

TRAVELOGUE 58
Rise Hall Great House - Montego Bay, Jamaica.

THE GORE 60
on the: *Psycho Holocaust*, *Bunnyman* and *If a Tree Falls*.

AUDIO BOMB 63
on the: *PlayStation*. *Exhumed*.

PLAY BOMB 66
on the: *Fear 3*, *Alien: Mad Max Returns*, and more.

CLASS 70
Roy Thomas and Gerry Conway's *Man-Thing*.

NOTE FROM UNDERGROUND

My second-hand VHS copy of *Fright Night* was a fetish object in my early teen years. I'd first discovered it at my local Jumbo Video, in the "dungeon," which was the store's horror section – a cordoned-off space painted and decorated to look like Dracula's castle.

At that age, without internet or anyone to recommend horror movies to me, I'd become accustomed to judging a movie by its cover. *Fright Night* is one of those rare films that actually surpasses its unforgettable artwork, and I fell under its spell immediately, entranced by that image of a vampiric cloud looming over a suburban home. As *RMF*'s art director, Gary, says of the film, "It's like a Halloween bag for kids: it's got everything in there." Indeed it does: multiple monsters, insane special effects, explosions, blood, skeletons, meltings (is there anything cooler than a good monster melting?) and just enough snark to tease the teenage hormones. But more than that, it had an awkward hero who also wore dorky clothes, who also loved horror movies, who also lived in the suburbs and who also shared a house with his single mom. This was a familiar world to me.



When the store eventually sold off a copy of *Fright Night* (I snapped it up, ecstatic at my luck. Apparently the idiot store manager had no idea what treasure he was parting with!) it came in one of those signature Jumbo Video orange plastic snap cases; I loved the sound of the tape shifting in the box. That "clunk-clunk" signalled a weight, a physical presence that's absent from digital formats. This was a thing of substance, dammit.

Of course I shared the movie with my best friend and we'd thrill at the gruesome stuff, laugh at Charley Brewster's failed attempts to be taken seriously (what teen can't relate to that?) and quote Evil Ed until we drove everyone else nuts with, "Oh, you're so cool, BREWSTER!" Riding one's bike to the video store, agonizing over movie choices, staying up late, gorging on junk food and bonding over genre movies was a ritual with which I'm sure many of you reading this are well acquainted.

However, if you're of a younger generation – and probably rolling your eyes right now in anticipation of me describing how I walked ten miles uphill in a blizzard just to avoid paying a dollar in late fees – you might be wondering what's up with all the VHS nostalgia of late. Aside from multiple books of VHS cover artwork, analog-themed blogs and conventions featuring tape trading, some newly manufactured videos have actually popped up as of late. Ti West's 2009 retro horror feature *The House of the Devil* is available in a special bundle that includes a clamshell VHS version of the film; Mondo (in partnership with Intervention Films) put out a limited-edition VHS version of early '80s slasher film *Sledgehammer* and plans to release more movies in the format; and Camp Motion Pictures just released another '80s oddity, *The Basement*, in the particularly unwieldy VHS big-box format. Nostalgic novelties? Sure, but the reason that nostalgia is so potent lies in the collective memory of those formative VHS horror years.

Y'see, many of us were weaned by those little nests of analog tape. My mom will always be a hero for raising my brother and I alone for so many years, while commuting into the city and having a full-time career. That's an exhausting regimen and us kids often had to find ways to entertain ourselves in the evenings and on weekends. There was one theatre within biking distance, nowhere to go after dark and video rentals were an affordable indulgence on our middle-class budget. And the video store section that looked like a funhouse was an obvious draw.

The ritual of going out, making a choice from a limited selection and then settling in to watch a movie made us active participants in the viewing process; no click-of-a-button downloads, on-demand or Netflix back then. Being able to go to the store on your own and pick out anything you wanted [outside of the porno behind those saloon doors in the back, of course], was a form of freedom and a step into adulthood. The ease with which you could watch an R-rated film in the basement while your parents were out or sleeping was both morally reckless and unquestionably awesome. Those VHS tapes were a balm (if at all) regulated conduit to a larger world. In that sense, they helped shape an entire generation.

No wonder we're so in love with those land analog bricks. Without 'em I never would've been able to invite *Fright Night* into my home, I may not have formed that lifelong bond with the genre, and I definitely wouldn't be here writing this. So the next time you see some yellowed VHS cases mouldering away on someone's garage-sale table, just remember: those tapes lived and died for our sins, so be kind and...well, you know.

100% in Culture & Entertainment

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RUE MORGUE #114 is dedicated to our friend William Jameson. Rest in Peace. You will be missed.

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POST MORTEM

COMMENTS • QUESTIONS • CRITICISM



LONG LIVE JOHN BOWEN for "Bowen Calls Bullshit" in *RM#113* FYI: If you direct, write or simply enjoy horror, have some pride in that. Please don't invent some pretentious new genre name because you feel "above" horror. John and I will loudly call bullshit on such actions. Then we'll both get stabby.

RICHARD GAVIN, VIA FACEBOOK

TROLLHUNTER was a lot of fun. Can't wait till they run it with a US remake.

ODUG RINALDI, VIA FACEBOOK

THANKS FOR YOUR REVIEW of my translation of *The Necrophiliac* (in *RM#112*). It has been such a long road getting this thing published that you can't imagine... well, you work in publishing, so perhaps you can imagine. In any case, your review was great not only because it gave much needed press to the novel, but because it really captured the essence of what is important and unique about this work. It made me deliciously happy to see that someone really "gets it."

DOAN BAPST - TORONTO, ONTARIO

NOW PLAYING Pine Box Boys - *Child of Calamity* (featured in *RM#112*). My first P&B purchase. Nice bit of banjo picking and a gravelly-voiced lead. Thanks @RueMorgue!

@MICK19622, VIA TWITTER



Hailey Hemington spoofs up the Rue Morgue booth at the Calgary Comic & Entertainment Expo

I'M STOKED that you guys have that iPad app now. The only store in town that carries your mag always carried it a month behind. When I went in April and got my fresh new issue from March and saw the ad for the app I said, "No more of this shit." I've gotten the last two issues on my iPad and couldn't be happier. I love all the links and stuff you guys put in there. Keep up the awesome work!

FANTIZZLE SCHMANTIZZLE, VIA FACEBOOK

LISTENING TO @RueMorgue's totally awesome Horror Court podcast. Highly recommend. As a HUGE Devil's Rejects fan, I am currently influenced :)

@JIMMYTHEGHOST, VIA TWITTER

HEY RUE, why not do a retrospective story on one of my all-time favourite, obscure, low-budget films: *Fade to Black*? This rare, underappreciated gem is worthy of a second look. I know I'm not the lone member of this cult! Eric Binford Lives!

RYAN CECIL, VIA FACEBOOK

I FOUND YOUR website to be really extraordinary. Even though I was amazed by all the things in it, I have to lament the lack of subscriptions available for Mexico. Even so, I send my best wishes and a hearty congratulations for everything it represents.

**PROFESSOR MARTIN ALZATA
- SINALOA, MEXICO**

[International subscriptions for both print and digital versions of Rue Morgue are available on our website, rue-morgue.com - Ed.]

I JUST CAME BACK from the Calgary Comic Expo, where I was most pleasantly surprised to see a Rue Morgue booth! It was staffed by three sweet and delightful guys (Gosh, I could have eaten them up with a spoon! Nom!) who were gracious and helpful. I was able to snap up back issues at a mere \$2 more than the original cover price. Thank you so much for coming to Calgary and representing the horror genre. Not only do you create an amazing magazine each and every month, but you do it better than anyone else!

SUSAN BRUNE - EDMONTON, ALBERTA

CORRECTION: We mistakenly ran the wrong cover for Michael Hoenig's score for *The Blob* (1988) in

RM#113. We regret the error and have corrected it in the digital version of the magazine.

**WOULD YOU RATHER
WEDNESDAYS?**
WEEKLY ON OUR FACEBOOK PAGE

WOULD YOU RATHER live in a world where live cockroaches are used for currency, or live in a world where house spiders grow to the size of chihuahuas?

It would have to be the roaches...but could you flatten them out enough to fit in a wallet?

PETER RAKARIC

Spiders. I don't think I'd wanna roll around naked in a pile of roaches.

NICK WEAVER

I would commit suicide before either option, then the roaches would have food, and the spiders would have a nest.

CHUCK KNIGHT

I vote roach money just to see how it would change the general mood of hip hop videos.

ANDREW MARTINEZ

I feel like vomiting.

BERNAINE SHELL



WE ENCOURAGE READERS TO SEND THEIR COMMENTS VIA MAIL OR EMAIL. LETTERS MAY BE EDITED FOR LENGTH AND/OR CONTENT. PLEASE SEND TO: info@rue-morgue.com OR

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Bloodlines

NEWS HIGHLIGHTS HORROR HAPPENINGS

BEHIND THE MASK DIRECTOR SEEKS FUNDING VIA FACEBOOK

It's getting increasingly tough to secure financing for an indie movie project. When it comes to fundraising, filmmakers must be more creative today than they've ever been. Scott Glosserman, director and co-writer of the 2006 meta-horror hit *Behind the Mask: The Rise of Leslie Vernon* and the recently released made-for-MTV thriller *The Truth Below*, isn't just waiting for the next financing model to come along—he's creating it.

Glosserman is turning to social networking to finance *Before the Mask*, what he calls a "spramake"—a sequel/prequel/remake—to *Behind the Mask*. On the project's Facebook page (facebook.com/beforethemask), you aren't simply prompted to "like" the film—you're asked to help finance it by pre-ordering the DVD. Clicking the "Pre-Order Now" button doesn't take you to another site, it collects your credit card information through a proprietary Facebook application.

"It's a completely new way to finance a picture," says Glosserman. "I think people are very accustomed to clicking the 'Like' button, but they might not realize this is an actual appeal to get them to support the film."

Glosserman and co-writer David J. Steve have long wanted to return to the title character's killing fields, and they've always known the follow-up's central conceit: that it would deconstruct the conventions and archetypes of horror prequels, sequels and remakes just as the original examined the foundations of the slasher mythology. Glosserman is tight-lipped about the plot of the new film, but he confirms that most of the original cast, including Robert Englund as Leslie's nemesis, will return. He drops hints that the resurrection of characters thought dead—"Leslie is incredibly deft at making it look as though certain people may have died, but I think they're coming back..."—and promises new careers that will trump those in its predecessor.

"Doc Halloran gets Leslie back onto the psych couch," he offers of the plot. "They have a philo-



The makers of *Behind the Mask: The Rise of Leslie Vernon* are pioneering a new way to raise funds for a follow-up.

sophical sparring match, but not before Doc ends up grilling another iconic horror slasher."

Glosserman turned to crowd-funding after Anchor Bay, which released *Behind the Mask* on DVD and Blu-ray, decided not to get involved with a second film, after initially showing interest.

"I said, 'Are you telling me that if I deliver you a complete, finished film, you guys will not distribute it for a fee?'" recalls Glosserman. "They said no. At that point I realized that if Anchor Bay, which has all the clout and the first film to boot, isn't interested in releasing this thing, it was kind of pointless to go out to Screen Gems and Lionsgate. So I decided, why don't I just turn it over to the community, to see? Because maybe Anchor Bay's right. Maybe it's not worthy of a sequel. But if it is, I'll certainly be able to tell once I go out to the horror community."

At this writing, the campaign has been live for approximately two weeks, and has raised just

over \$4000—not a bad start, but far from Glosserman's lofty goal of one million dollars. He understands that he's asking fans to take a leap of faith, and that it might require some convincing before they're ready to enter their credit card numbers.

"When you're introducing any new technology, or any trailblazing endeavour, it takes a beat for acceptance," he says. "We're the first-ever Facebook app, that we know of, that's introducing a commitment to pre-buy—a way to collect credit card information but not charge it until you meet a reserve price."

If all goes as planned, Glosserman will have secured a number of co-financiers and partners by the time this article sees print, and will be well into pre-production.

"I might kick myself for saying this, but I'd love to be shooting in the fall and winter."

APRIL SNELLINGS



HORROR FILMS IGNITE CONTROVERSY ON BOTH ENDS OF POLITICAL SPECTRUM

While much of the furor over extreme movies last year rained down on the neo-sexual excesses of Srdjan Spasojevic's *A Serbian Film*, 2011 has already seen controversies erupt in three countries over three different movies. And for the first time in recent memory, attacks came from both sides of the political divide.

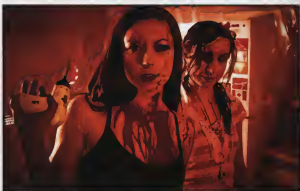
In April, *Dead Hooker in a Trunk*, the debut feature from Vancouver-based twin filmmakers Jen and Sylvia Soska, had its premiere at the Dark Bridges Film Festival in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, cancelled and its posters destroyed in response to an anonymous call to the Roxy Theatre. The problem? The title was deemed offensive in light of a rash of Aboriginal prostitutes who'd gone missing in Western Canada. Jason Eisener's *Hobo with a Shotgun* received similar treatment from the Roxy three days later, with the theatre citing a lack of interest, despite 90 attendees confirmed for the screening via Facebook. The nearby Broadway Theatre welcomed both movies with open arms. *Dead Hooker in a Trunk* was subsequently released in Australia and the UK in May, and hit the latter's Horror Channel in July.

"The only negative feedback has sadly been from our own country. I love the Brits," says Jen Soska.

Yet two months later, the British Board of Film Classification effectively banned the release of *The Human Centipede II (Full Sequence)* by refusing to give it the minimum R18 rating necessary for sale in the UK. (R18 restricts movies to eighteen-or-older theatres and licensed sex shops.) The last movie to get that kind of treatment was the 2009 dissection drama *Grotesque* from Japanese director Koji Shiraishi (RMA'96). The sequel to Tom Six's 2010 mad science gross-out movie reportedly depicts a man raping a human centipede caboose with barbed wire wrapped around his penis. The ratings board suggested that the film "poses a real, as opposed to a fanciful, risk that harm is likely to be caused to potential viewers."

In an email response published in *Empire* magazine, Six stated, "Thank you, BBFC, for putting spoilers of my movie on your website, and thank you for banning my film in this exceptional way. Apparently I made a horrific horror film, but shouldn't a good horror film be horrific?"

A few days later on the opposite side of the



Atlantic, Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam signed a bill into law that makes it a crime to use the web to "transmit or display an image" that could "frighten, intimidate or cause emotional distress" to anyone who sees it. Those found guilty face a maximum of one year in jail and a \$2500 fine. The American Civil Liberties Union has already promised a lawsuit on free speech grounds.

Also in June, the world premiere of *The Life Zone* took place. It's a \$1 million, *Saw*-like thriller about a mysterious man (*The Sopranos*' Robert Loggia) and a physician (*The Girl Next Door*'s Blanche Baker) who kidnap a trio of reluctant mothers from abortion clinics and force them to carry their babies to term. The flick — penned in eleven days by former judge, novelist and recent New Jersey Republican state senate candidate Kenneth Del Vecchio — riled up the pro-choice masses. Though only approximately 50 people saw the film's premiere at the Hoboken International Film Festival in June, a trailer for the movie had racked up more than 100,000 views on YouTube a month after its only screening. Comments on that site, as well as those found on the IMDb and movieline.com, both vigorously attacked and defended the movie.



Jen and Sylvia Soska (top), makers of *Dead Hooker in a Trunk*, are among the latest filmmakers to incite controversy with a horror movie, and Nina Tranterfeld (left) and Lindsay Haun star in *The Life Zone*

"I like to have films that have controversy surrounding them because that's the best way to effectuate change and get people talking," says Del Vecchio. "And nobody's making a pro-life movie in mainstream Hollywood."

Jen Soska says the reactions incurred by all four films could potentially set a dangerous precedent.

"What unites all of these cases is the ease with which movies can be targeted and harassed by public servants and private activists, compared with the real-world horrors that they represent," she says. "You can't just out something bad out and pretend it doesn't exist. How are we ever supposed to deal with real horror in our lives if it's completely foreign to us?"

A.S. BERMAN

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ROADKILL



youtube.com/watch?v=QuMBwaSkIk
Long before director Jason Eisener blew folks away with *Reco* with a *Shotgun*, he shed this dead clown 37-second bumper titled *The Number to Heaven* for Austin's 2009 Fantastic Fest genre film festival. You probably already know that you should never trust a monster, but here's yet another reason why.

comicalalliance.com/2010/11/10/children-draw-h-p-lovecraft-creatures/

Artists and filmmakers alike have long lamented the difficulty of translating H.P. Lovecraft's oddly described monstrosities from printed page to visual image. Kids, however, don't overthink this stuff and here's proof in the form of a small gallery of children's drawings based on the Cthulhu mythos and more!

secondmonsters.com

This quirky online comic by Will Penny only offers up one or two new strips each month, but the premise makes it worth looking up. Each full-color, four-panel vignette focuses on the ways monsters might interact with the human world should they actually exist, such as completely misunderstanding the phrase "Chinese takeout."

ctfrows.com

Sports and horror may seem like strange bedfellows, but Axel Kahagen is trying to change all that with his online serial novel *The Cedar Falls Hoosier-Cows*, about a baseball team that not only has a murderer on its roster, but is also being haunted. Home run or foul ball? May depend on how you feel about America's favorite pastime.

insigniblood.net

Reign of Blood is a turn-based RPG that mainly plays out via text and the occasional image. Create a vampire, join a coven of other players, and then duel with people from around the world or complete quests to improve your stats and gear. Also available: various mini-games and forums for those who prefer in-character roleplaying over standard hustling and killing.

Compiled by MONICA S. KUEHLER

Got a Roadkill suggestion? Email a link to roadkill@neo-angeles.com

AFTER DARK FILM SET TO BECOME A PLAY TO DIE FOR

In an age when most of the horror movies being adapted for the stage are transformed into ironic musicals (The *Human Centipede*) or given a trendy cross-dressing twist (Carnel), sometimes the edgiest decision you can make is to present a straight-up adaptation of a film. This October, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania's *The Rage of the Stage* Players has set its sights on a movie with little name recognition: *The Butcher Brothers*. The *Hamlets*.

Released in 2007 as part of Lionsgate's *After Dark Horrorfest*—8 films to Die For series, *The Hamlets* follows a stranger-trapping family with a big, if poorly disguised, secret.

"*The Hamlets* seemed like an ideal fit for *The Rage of the Stage* Players because the film itself flows very much like a stage play," says James Michael Shoberg, co-executive producer/artistic director for the theatre company. "It also fascinated me in that the majority of it plays out like a simple family drama, albeit a quirky one, but with the added layer of a horror twist."

Quirky has been the fringe company's calling card since its inaugural production of *The Absolution of Dreesen* in 2002, which drew the attention of beloved genre tough guy Tom Atkins (*The Fug*, among others). Since then, the players have taken well-received stabs at re-imagining several classics of the page and screen, including *The Wizard of Oz*, which they set in a mental institution.

After seeing *The Hamlets*, Shoberg messaged *The Butcher Brothers*, soon de guerre of directors Mitchell Allen and Phil Flores, through Facebook.

"They were both kind and receptive to the proposal," he says, "and seemingly ecstatic over the prospect of my adapting their script for the stage."

Not only is this the most contemporary story the troupe has tackled, it's also the only non-original story they've performed that hasn't been staged by other groups around the world first.

Says Shoberg: "It still feels so surreal to me that such a rare opportunity was granted to a warped little fringe theatre company such as ours."

A.S. BERMAN

ENTRAILS

Gene Colan, the artist famous to horror fans for his work on Marvel's *The Tomb of Dracula* series in the '70s, died June 23 at 84, after suffering from cancer and liver disease. Though he tackled everything from Batman to Captain America in his career, Colan's dream-like "painting with pencil" visual style was enthusiastically embraced by fans during the 70-issue run of *The Tomb of Dracula*. Colan and writer Marv Wolfman took the Court from menacing to heroic, adding the character of Blade, the vampire hunter, to Marvel's stable of heroes in the process. Colan also worked on DC's short-lived *Night Force* in the 1990s (also with Wolfman), and 1967's *The Spectre* reboot.

Long-time horror and science fiction anthologist and editor Martin H. Greenberg died June 25 at age 70, after a long illness. Throughout his career he worked with Stephen King, Dean Koontz, and Isaac Asimov, among many others. Roughly 2500 anthologies have been credited to him in some way, including *Nightmares on Elm Street*, *Fredrick Krueger's Seven Sweetest Dreams*, *Vampire Detectives*, *Werewolves and Ali*, *Hell Breaking Loose*.

In June, several fans of Edgar Allan Poe won the opportunity to pitch in on the \$483,000 restoration of a cottage in the Bronx, New York, Poe's last place of residence before his death in 1849. Fans from across America submitted Poe-inspired paintings, poetry and other works to win the chance to assist in the refurbishment of the house, which will open to the public later this summer. Winners' creations were put in a time capsule and sealed in the walls.

It was recently reported that some of Norway's new diplomats are trained in the finer points of the country's black metal music scene, in response to enquiries fielded by those in its foreign service missions worldwide. While this rise in public awareness has been attributed to Dimmu Borgir's May performance at the Oslo Spektrum arena, the upcoming 20th anniversary of May events in the True Norwegian Black Metal movement, including the 1992 church burnings and the murder of Mayhem founder Øystein "Euronymous" Aarseth the following year, may also be responsible.

Hailey Joel Osment, star of 1999's *The Sixth Sense*, returns to horror in *Wish: the*, the forthcoming adaptation of the 2004 graphic novel by Steve Niles and artist Choe. This modern retelling of the Frankenstein tale will be one of the first movies produced by Slasher Films, the studio founded by former Guns N' Roses guitarist Slash last year.

The US Supreme Court recently struck down a 2005 California ban on the sale of violent video games to those under eighteen. Speaking for the majority in the court's 7-2 ruling, Associate Justice Antonin Scalia wrote "California's argument would fare better if there were a longstanding tradition in this country of specially restricting children's access to depictions of violence, but there is none." He went on to cite the circulation of Grimm's fairy tales to children: "The basic principles of freedom of speech and the press, like the First Amendment's command, do not vary when a new and different medium for communication appears."

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THIRTY
FOUR





CORONER'S REPORT

WEIRD STATS & MORBID FACTS

CASE NO.

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During a 2004 procedure to correct a testicular malformation, Romanian doctor Neum Coma lost his temper after making a surgical error and proceeded to sever his patient's penis and then cut it into three pieces. Coma was barred from practicing medicine for three years and ordered to pay damages to the victim.

According to Ken Hinkle's unauthorized biography of Tim Burton, during the time the filmmaker worked at Disney he often "took to sitting in a closet or hiding under his desk to avoid dealing with anyone."

During the summer months, one child dies in a portable outdoor pool every five days.

Author Henry James (*The Turn of the Screw*) once wrote that "an enthusiasm for [Edgar Allan] Poe is the mark of a decidedly primitive stage of reflection."

Landing in debtor's prison in medieval England was frequently a death sentence as the incarcerated wouldn't be freed until he or she not only paid off all outstanding debts, but also the new ones accrued for the food and clothing consumed while in lock-up.

Bobby Fuller, singer of "I Fought the Law," died in July 1966 when he asphyxiated on a build-up of gasoline fumes inside his unlocked car. Some still consider his death suspicious.

A Woodstock, Ontario structure is adorned with the death mask of Thomas Cook (as a warning to would-be criminals), who was hanged at the building—a former jail and courthouse—in 1862 for beating his wife to death. The executioner accidentally made the hanging rope too long and Cook was decapitated, his head apparently rolling into the crowd of onlookers.

More than 160 different actors have played Dracula since the beginning of cinema. The Count is the most filmed movie monster of all time.

A disgruntled employee at the Singapore Zoo committed suicide by animal attack in 2008 by jumping into the tiger enclosure and provoking the animals.

Pittsburgh police were called to a blood-covered hotel room earlier this year, after firefighters discovered the gruesome chamber during a routine call. Detectives spent several hours investigating the scene before realizing that it was an abandoned set from the horror movie *New Terminal Hotel*.

Robert Gary Jones died last year when he was mowed down by a plane making an emergency landing on the South Carolina beach where he was jogging.

David Arquette's character, Dewey, was supposed to die at the end of *Scream* (1996), but due to negative audience reaction during test screenings, the ending was changed so that he survives.

In January 2007, French rapist Nicolas Coccogni strangled his cellmate and then attempted to cut out his heart and eat it, but what he actually removed and consumed was the man's lung and some of his muscle tissue.

Compiled by MONICA S. KUESLER

Got a weird stat or morbid fact? Send it through to info@rue-morgue.com

THE RUE MORGUE SICK TOP SIX

BAR BRUTALITY

1. **FROM DUSK TILL DAWN**
VOLUMINOUS VAMPIRE VIOLENCE
2. **THE FLY**
BRUNDFLEFLY VS. BARFLY
3. **FEAST**
HUMAN PUB GRUB
4. **SHAUN OF THE DEAD**
UNHAPPY HOUR AT THE WINCHESTER
5. **NEAR DARK**
LIQUIDATE THE LOCALS
6. **MULBERRY STREET**
BAT SWING MEETS RAFFING

Neecronomicomics

BY JAY P. FOSGITT



IN THE END, IT WASN'T **SILVER** THAT KILLED THE WEREWOLF—JUST A VERY UNFORTUNATE TYPO.

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TORTURED TAGLINES

FROM **LOVE BITCHES** (1975)

"HE TURNS A QUIET NEIGHBORHOOD INTO A SLAUGHTERHOUSE."



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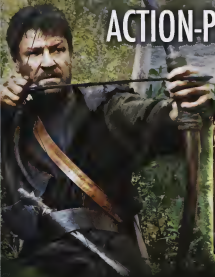
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WITH A REMAKE OUT THIS MONTH, WE GO BACK TO THE ORIGINAL BLOODSUCKER-PLAGUED SUBURBS OF 1985'S

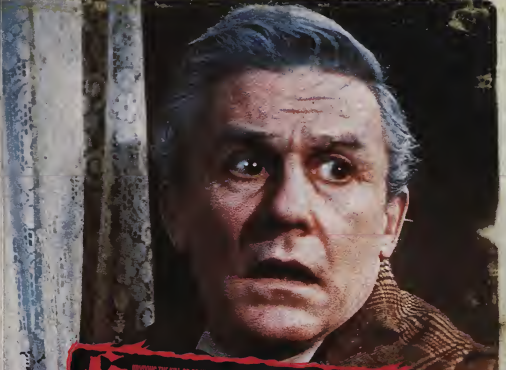
Fright Night

WRITER/DIRECTOR **TIM HOLLAND** HELPS US ILLUSTRATE HOW HIS UNLIKELY HIT REINVENTED THE VAMPIRE FOR MODERN VIEWERS.

RIGHT
NEXT DOOR TO
HELL

by APRIL SNELLINGS





REVIVING THE ALIEN-OR-BE-KILLED WORLD OF HORROR CAN BE AS TRICKY FOR MONSTERS AS IT IS FOR THEIR HUMAN VICTIMS. VAMPIRES ARE A PERFECT EXAMPLE. YOU'D NEVER KNOW IT FROM THEIR CURRENT PERCH AT THE TOP OF THE FOOD CHAIN, BUT BLOODSUCKERS WERE PRACTICALLY ON THE CHANGING SPECIES LIST 30 YEARS AGO. THEY THROUPEL DURING NAMMERS' MEYDAY IN THE 1980s, BUT BY THE LATE '70s DRACULA AND HIS PLAGUE HAD SLUNK OFF INTO THE BOX-OFFICE GUTTERS OF ART-HOUSE HORROR AND GOTHICKY POOR.

It wasn't necessarily a cross of their own making. If vampires were teetering on the edge of extinction, there were a few dozen guys with masks and meathooks who were ready to give them one last shove. No one ever wondered whether Dracula or Freddy Krueger would win in a knife-knuckled brawl. The outcome, it seemed, had already been decided. There were a time or two noble efforts to raise the undead - Tony Scott's *The Hunger* comes to mind - but, ironically, no one could figure out how to make modernity relevant to '80s filmgoers. Forget a shot in the arm - what the subgenre needed was a few thousand volts of electricity delivered straight to its failing heart. The man for the job, it turns out, was Tom Holland. As a successful screenwriter who had penned *The Beast Within*, *Glass of 1984* and *Psycho II*, Holland was ready to trade in his typewriter for a director's chair. Bored with slasher films and nostalgic for the vintage horror of his childhood, Holland had written a script called *Fright Night* - an affectionate valentine to classic horror that was inspired by the same Cornell Woodstock story as the Holland-scripted 1984 kiddie adventure flick *Clash & Dagger*. He may have been uprooted as a director, but he already had a twenty-year track record as a writer and actor. Colum-

bia financed the film even though their expectations were low; everyone knew vampire movies didn't make money, but what the hell? The studio already had a sure thing for so it thought with its John Travolta/Jamie Lee Curtis sex-comedy drama *Perfect*, so it could afford to indulge the hot screenwriter who had helped Universal score a box-office hit with *Psycho II*.

But Columbia gave Holland something even more valuable than *Fright Night*'s \$9 million bankroll. The studio also gave the first-time director some of the key creative talent from *Ghostbusters*, including FX wizard Richard Edlund. Holland's comparatively low-budget project, which included a number of ambitious, FX-heavy sequences, would reap the benefits of *Ghostbusters*' groundbreaking and expensive FX innovations. He also had a dynamic cast that included veteran actors Roddy McDowall (*Planet of the Apes*), as aging horror host Peter Vincent, and Chris Sarandon, as stylish vampire Jerry Dandrige, alongside a trio of verbal unknowns: Stephen Geoffreys as the hero's buffed sidekick, Evil Ed; Amanda Bearse as the doe-eyed sweetheart, Amy Peterson; and William Baskette as *Fright Night*'s perennially scared-shitless over-in-favour of Raskdale's boy-meet-door charm.)

To everyone's surprise, it was lightning in a bottle. *Fright Night* succeeded with the very audience that it took to task - kids who lived up to watch their parents get sliced in half during sessions of poorly lit, dope-and-boogie-fueled sexual acrobatics - and ushered in a new wave of vampire

LONG IN THE TOOTH
Amy (Amanda Bearse)
goes full vampire.

movies that included *The Last Boys*, *Near Dark*, *Vamp*, *My Best Friend Is a Vampire* and, of course, *Fright Night Part 2*. We're still feeling the aftershocks today; it's not a stretch to say that *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *From Dusk Till Dawn* and even *True Blood* all owe their punctured necks to Holland's pitch-perfect horror/comedy.

The director went on to helm *Child's Play* and a pair of Stephen King adaptations (*The Langoliers* in 1993 and *Thinner* in 1996) before taking a ten-year hiatus from

filmmaking. He's back now with Dead Rabbit Films — a joint venture with long-time business partner David Chickler — and the company's first project, an anthology series called *Bob Holland's Twisted Tales*. With all eyes on DreamWorks' upcoming remake of his modern vampire classic, Holland spoke with us from his Studio City home about the perfect storm that revved a dying genre.

Welcome to *Fright Night* for real.

▼ I WANTED TO RESUSCITATE THE CLASSIC HORROR GENRES. ▼

by
David
Koppe

Fright Night went into production just after the slasher genre peaked in the mid-'80s. There hadn't been a high-profile vampire movie in quite a while. Was it difficult to get this film made in that climate?

People thought I was nuts, because they had stopped making vampire movies. The genre had been exhausted. First, there had been a huge failure, which was a remake of *Dracula* with Frank Langella. It had made no money. This is hard to believe right now, but vampires were dead, dead, dead. And then they followed that up with a farce, which is the nail in the coffin, and that was *Love at First Bite* [1979]. A genre becomes exhausted when they start making comedies out of it. I was able to get [*Fright Night*] through because I was hot as a writer, but everybody thought doing a vampire movie was certain commercial death. That's where the vampire genre was, and somehow I got *Fright Night* made, and, yes, it sparked a revival. It modernized the take on vampires.

What was the genesis of the story?

I had written a movie called *Clous & Dogger* [1984] that was supposedly a remake of *The Window* [a 1949 film noir about a boy who witnesses a neighbour's murder but nobody believes him, and he's pursued by the killer], but it wasn't, because *The Window* wasn't enough to base a movie on anymore. *The Window* was the juvenile version of [Wilfred Hitchcock's] *Near Window*, and it was written by the same writer — Cornell Woolrich... I just thought it would be hysterically funny if a real vampire moved in next door to a teenage horror fan. Of course, nobody's going to believe a horror fan if he starts screaming that there's a vampire next door. I didn't know how to make a story out of it, though, and I walked around with the idea for about a year and I'll never know why, but then the idea for the Roddy McDowall character came to me. That was who the boy would go to, of course, for help — an aging horror movie star. A Vincent Price or a Peter Cushing, somebody like that. And the minute I had that element, I just had to write the script.

Fright Night blends the old-school, Hammer style of horror with the new stuff that was coming up in the '80s. Why did you take that approach?

Fright Night really was a love letter to the fans, but nobody realized it. I think that somewhere in there, when Roddy's character is leaving the studio where he works, he says he's outraged because all the kids want now are slashers running around in old masks. Nobody wanted the old-fashioned monsters anymore. So that's why I decided to make the movie. I wanted to resuscitate the classic horror genres. I wanted to bring them back, because that's what I had grown up with.

Peter Vincent is portrayed after classic horror film before ends as Peter Cushing and Vincent Price. Did you consider reaching out to any of those legends to play the part?

I did. Peter Cushing's health was not good at the time, and I was also told the same thing about Vincent Price. Subsequently, after I had finished the movie, Roddy had me over to his house for dinner with Vincent Price and his wife, Carol Browne. They were lovely, wonderful people. Vincent was very frail, and he passed soon after that. I was a fan — now you've got me being a fan, because I was a big fan of Vincent Price. But he didn't want to talk about movies at all, he wanted to talk about cooking and art!

Just what kind of a vampire is Jerry? He has an average room, lives in the 'burbs and wears stylish sweaters. Yet he's also got Gothic art, sleeps in a coffin and is subject to many rules of the traditional vampire.

Jerry was the 60 vampire. It was a way of updating the vampire so that he fit in and you wouldn't notice him. Even down to the banality of his name: Jerry Dandrige. But at the same time, he's still a vampire, so all the traditional rules still apply. That's what I was trying for. It's really powered by the huge affection for the classic Universal horror movies. I came up at that moment when it was going from Hammer and AP to *Psycho*. It's always hard to describe to people historically, but *Psycho* just changed everything. [It] led to the slasher films — [John] Carpenter and Freddy the 13th — and it killed off the classic monsters.

CHRIS SARANDON SPILLS THE GORY DETAILS ABOUT BECOMING
FRIGHT NIGHT's FASHIONABLE GHOUL-ABOUT-TOWN.

UNHALLOWED BE THY NEIGHBOUR

by TREVOR TUMINSKI

"M

HO WOULDN'T WANT TO PLAY SOMEONE WHO'S ALL-POWERFUL, LIVES FOREVER, AND IS IRRESISTIBLE?"
REMARKS CHRIS SARANDON OF HIS MEMORABLE TURN AS JERRY DANDRIGE IN TOM HOLLAND'S *FRIGHT NIGHT*.

It's an observation that may seem like a no-brainer in hindsight, but at the time he was offered the role of the vampire-next-door, Sarandon—who had previously received an Oscar nomination for his performance opposite Al Pacino in *Dog Day Afternoon*, appeared alongside screen luminaries such as Ava Gardner, Burgess Meredith and John Cassavese in *The Sentinel*, and split celluloid with Rutger Hauer, John Hurt, Dennis Hopper and Burt Lancaster in Sam Peckinpah's *The Osterman Weekend*—was understandably apprehensive about starring in a campy horror-comedy with a first-time director calling the shots.

"Before reading [the script], I was wary of playing a vampire," says the actor, now 69. "I wasn't sure this was the right career move, of cetera. Bullshit, really, because as soon as I read the script I was hooked. I thought it was brilliantly written and conceived, and immediately asked to meet with Tom and the producers."

As it turned out, the project couldn't have been in better hands. Coming from an acting background himself, Holland was both open-minded and in control, describing the movie to Sarandon shot-by-shot during that initial meeting before the pair began constructing Jerry's back story.

"His openness and willingness to collaborate was exemplary," says Sarandon of Holland, with whom he remains friends to this day. "We also rehearsed, which for a movie like [*Fright Night*] is almost unheard of. We were encouraged to create character biographies, and we tried out ideas, many of which became part of the movie."

Immersing himself in classic bloodsucker cinema such as *Moderato*, *Dracula* (1931) and Roman Polanski's *The Fearless Vampire Killers*, Sarandon also conducted his own "bat research," contributing one particular affection to his character that he says Holland absolutely loved: Jerry's love of fruit.

"I discovered that most bats are not vampire bats but fruit-eating, so I thought it would be cool for Jerry to have some fruit bat somewhere in his genetic code," he explains. "We all were very conscious of paying homage to the old movies without doing it slavishly, sort of turning some of the conventions on their head, having fun with them but not making fun of them."

The behind-the-scenes fun definitely translated to the screen but, while the lighthearted tone contributed to the success of the finished film, there's no question *Fright Night*'s bar-raising makeup and practical effects—arguably even more effective because they were nestled inside of a comedy—are just as important to the movie's lasting popularity among horror fans. According to Sarandon, the old-school process behind some of *Fright Night*'s most complex set pieces, including the scene where he rises Nosferatu-like from his basement tomb before suffering an explosive sunlight-related death, was occasionally trying.

"The makeup sessions for the 'final Jerry' were a bitch," he recalls. "Eight-hour sessions starting at 4 a.m., so that I could be on set at noon. This went on, I believe, for two weeks. Techniques today would cut down on the time taken, but the result was worth it. Also, the contact lenses were painted glass and couldn't be worn for more than a half hour at a time. I helped paint and texture my hand appliances to kill the boredom and actually had a ball doing it."

Whatever the challenges, the effort paid off.

Fright Night went on to become the surprise hit of the summer of '85 and an important milestone in Sarandon's career. The role solidified the versatile actor as a genre star, leading to a turn as The Creature in a 1987 TV version of *Frankenstein* and some of his best-known parts in films such as *The Princess Bride*, *Child's Play* and *The Nightmare Before Christmas* (as the voice of Jack Skellington).

Considering his initial trepidation to sink his teeth into *Fright Night*, it would seem the genre proved to be a good fit for Sarandon. While he had no interest in appearing in 1988's *Fright Night II* ("I would only have done it with the same team and they were not involved..."), the actor says he's read the "terrific" script for this month's *Fright Night* remake and is excited about Colin Farrell slipping into Jerry's fangs.

"I can't imagine a more perfect Jerry Dandrige for today than Colin," he says. "He has charisma, intelligence, danger and sex appeal. What could be a more perfect combo for the modern Jerry?"

SARANDON'S MOOD
Dandrige Sarandon casts a spell on Amy.



RUE MARQUE SNIFTS OUT THE *FRIGHT NIGHT*
REMAKE WITH COLIN FARRELL, ANTON YELCHIN
AND DIRECTOR CRAIG GILLESPIE.

ANOTHER SUNDOWN IN SUBURBIA

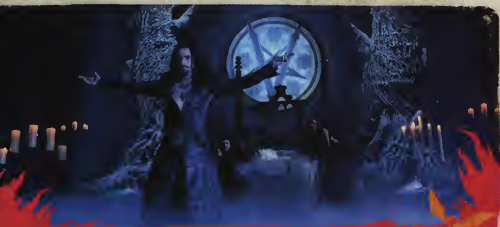
APRIL SNELLINGS

IT'S A BALMY, POSTCARD-PERFECT DAY IN LOS ANGELES, AND COLIN FARRELL IS PRETENDING TO BE A VAMPIRE. NOT JUST ANY VAMPIRE, THOUGH—FARRELL IS RECREATING A SCENE FROM THE 1985 HORROR-COMEDY CLASSIC *FRIGHT NIGHT*. HE STANDS AT THE DOOR OF A TINY OFFICE IN A NONDESCRIBING EMBROIDERED SUITE, TURNS HIS HEAD TO ONE SIDE AND DELIVERS HIS FAVORITE LINE FROM THE FILM: "SHE'S SOMEONE I KNEW, A LONG TIME AGO."

He hems it up and gives it a bit more theatricality than is strictly necessary, but you've got to hand it to him, the Irish-born actor does a pretty mean Jerry Dandridge. This isn't the version of the "GG vampire" that Farrell is bringing to the screen this month in DreamWorks' *Fright Night* remake, though. Screenwriter Muel Neezen (TV's *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*) and director Craig Gillespie (*Lost* and the *Raid* Girl) have

crafted a predator who takes more cues from Ted Bundy than Dracula.

"I love the whole notion of the vampire as having some romantic yearning, searching through all eternity for someone who'll take the trip with him," says Farrell. "I really wanted that robot in the film, but it wasn't designed that way. This version of Jerry is a sexual predator—someone with very little, if any, notion of what it is to be human."



BLAKE SWEENEY

anyone. Chris Savandon's Jerry was quite human, but this version of the character is completely without any sense of recognizable emotional drive, and he's quite bored at the stage. Quite bored with being alive and being alone. But I loved the script so much that I really had to go, okay, man, check your own preconceptions and address this as its own thing. You bring your own stuff to it, of course, and in the end, the fact that this character is so different than my own notions of what a vampire should be actually freed me up to address the vampire that Marti has designed."

That vampire is notably more aggressive than the one horror fans remember so fondly from the original. He doesn't waste time trying to charm Charley's mother (Toni Collette) into inviting him into the Brewster home; he simply digs up the gas pipes and blows up the house, reasoning that he doesn't need an invitation to enter a house that doesn't exist anymore. In April, journalists were shown approximately twenty minutes of the film, including a scene where Jerry attacks a girl he's holding captive in his home (while Charley watches from an adjacent room). The sequence is undeniably creepy; it plays out more like a rape scene than a typical vampire attack.

"That is one of the toughest scenes in the movie," says Gillespie in a thick-as-Wegimble Australian accent. "In very old versions of *Circus* and other old horror pictures, vampires are very scary. This version of Jerry is very much like a serial killer. That sets up the horror element in the film, and adds gravity to what's going on."

This reinterpretation of Tom Holland's iconic character isn't the only thing that sets the remake apart from the original, of course. The challenge for the makers of 2011's *Fright Night* is two-fold: not only must Jerry stand out from the fanged masses that have staked their claims in practically every medium imaginable, but the film must justify its own existence to genre audiences who are growing increasingly tired of less-than-successful "re-imaginings."

To that end, Neeson and Gillespie have taken a few sizeable liberties with the plot. This time around it's Evil Ed (Christopher Mintz-Plasse of *Kick-Ass* and *Superbad* fame), not his one-time best friend Charley Brewster (Star Trek's Anton Yelchin, who first discovers Jerry Dandridge's gruesome dietary restrictions. When Ed disappears, Charley comes to realize that his friend was into something, and that it has now fallen to him to stop Jerry. He enlists the reluctant aid of Peter Vincent, now a posh, Criss Angel-inspired stage magician played by Doctor Who's David Tennant, to help him kill his neighbor.

"There's also a sense of fractured society," adds Farrell. "A community that's sort of broken [apart] by lack of interest. It's a perfect place for a vampire to live because people work all day, and then close their blinds at night. Which is very different from the original — it has its own take on the idea of community. Nobody really watches what anyone else is doing."

Gillespie was only vaguely familiar with Holland's film, opting not to watch it until he had a firm grasp on how he'd shoot his version. Only then did he go back and screen the source material, looking for ways he could pay homage to Gillespie's opus while making *Fright Night* his own.

"I was not looking to do any sort of horror or vampire film," Gillespie says. "If anything, another vampire movie coming down the pike seemed like a negative thing to me. I was going to DreamWorks for a general meeting, and the script had been sent to me the night before because it was available. Before I read it, I was sure I wouldn't be interested. And then I read it, and I thought, man, it's really good. Marti wrote a really great script. I love this take on the vampire. He is singularly motivated by his own survival."

At first, Farrell was also reluctant to participate. "You certainly can't accuse it of being the most original notion," he laughs. "We're remaking a film from the '80s, and it's a vampire film. It's like, wow, really? You can't come up with anything original? I had to rationalize it to myself and say, 'Okay, why are they doing this?' I love the original. I had seen it ten or fifteen times by the time I was fifteen. When I heard they were doing a remake, my first thought was, oh, God, what a bunch of uncreative money-grabbers. And then I read the script and thought, oh, no, I really like it! I wanted to do it, but I could see that the fan base might be insulted or angered. But any story that's worth telling once is possibly worth telling again from another perspective."

Yelchin, on the other hand, claims to have had no reservations about getting involved, citing his confidence in Gillespie, the script and the casting.

"For me, the original is really about what was happening to the horror genre in the '80s," says the 22-year-old actor, who is currently prepping for his role in the big-screen adaptation of Dean Koontz's *Odd Thomas*.

"It was more than just a horror film. It was very self-conscious about the transition from older genre filmmaking to '80s filmmaking. It was really smart in that way, and a great film, and I'm a big fan. This one sort of re-imagines what the original has to say."

Besides the cast and above-the-line talent, the new *Fright Night* also boasts a team of makeup artists and sculptors from KMH FX Group who transformed Farrell into the monstrosity that Charley and Peter must ultimately face. Farrell notes, "The idea of getting dressed up and getting to put on all this special makeup — it was just a laugh. It's just glorified Halloween!"

So the elements for a successful remake are in place and reactions to test screenings and previews have been generally favourable, but the verdict will ultimately have to wait until *Fright Night*'s August 19 release.

"Was it a money-making venture, deciding to do the film? Of course it was," admits Farrell. "The studio's asking, 'How can we cash in on this vampire craze?' But the two people who brought the film to the studio, Alison [Jensenweir] and Mike [Gaelis], who are producing the film, are real film fans, and real fans of horror films and of the original."

"It's good, it's good," Gillespie says with a shrug. "It doesn't matter if it's a remake or an original, it's got to stand on its own two feet."





HAICHA'S LIPS Peter Vincent (Roddy McDowall) looks off Evil Ed (Stephen Geoffreys) and (bottom) his Herford-like Billy Cole (Jonathan Stark) suffers a meltdown

By the way, just what part of credence to Jerry's roommate, Billy Cole, supposed to be?

He's been bitten but he hasn't been changed... Billy Cole is Herford. He hasn't been turned completely yet, but he's on his way.

*You wrote several horror/thriller scripts in the late '70s and early '80s, but *Fright Night* was your directorial debut. Was that a matter of choice or opportunity?*

It was because I had just written a film called *Screen for Help* (1984), which was unleaseable. I don't want to say anything bad against the director, but I directed *Fright Night* to protect the material. I knew exactly what I wanted, and thank God that I got the opportunity to do it. I'd had a huge success with *Psycho II* (1983) and *Clock & Dagger* came out around that time, but then *Screen for Help* barely saw the light of day. So you have that kind of thing happen, and you want to protect what you've written. But I started out wanting to direct, and one of the ways to get to direct in those days was to write.

I understood that Columbia pretty much left you alone and let you make the film you wanted to make.

It was wonderful, because it was a small, throwaway movie on their slate. All eyes were on Perfect, yeth, John Travolta. You couldn't have gotten any hotter [than Travolta] at the time, and it also had James Lee Curtis. They thought that was going to be their huge movie, and nobody expected anything out of *Fright Night*. It was their lowest-budget project at the time. I got very, very lucky because I inherited the FX of Richard Eklund. Richard was just coming off of *Ghostbusters*, so all the problems they'd had doing things like optical printing and matte shots, they had solved on a much, much bigger movie. So I got the benefit of the technological advances from *Ghostbusters*.

*Besides *Ghostbusters*, Eklund had also worked on *Peter Pan*, *Robbers of the Lost Ark*, and the first two *Star Wars* films. How did he help shape *Fright Night*?*

He knew what the outer edge of possible was. Where you really see Richard is where Chris Sarandon dives off the balcony railing and swoops down on Roddy and Bill Ragsdale at the bottom of the stairs. He goes over, you see a bat, they go off the bat, they go onto the shadows—I think there's a cut in there somewhere—and then they go onto the puppet bat attacking the two leads. That optical was all Richard Eklund. And the other one where he had really made huge

advances was when the bat pulls loose when the sun hits and flies down the hallway to the basement. That's Richard Eklund. I have the props here. The bat is spectacular. It cost me about five grand to have it prepared and posed and encased, but it was some of the best money I've ever spent.

How did you go about finding the key talent for the film, particularly the young actors?

I had a wonderful casting director. Her name was Jackie Burch, and she did a hell of a job. She knew everybody who was young in town, and [then head of Columbia Pictures] Guy McEneaney provided Roddy. But I knew Roddy because I had written *Class of 1984* and he did a very, very nice turn in that as the teacher who breaks down and threatens the bad kid with a gun. So I was thrilled to get Roddy. He saw Peter Vincent as the cowardly lion and it was just a wonderful performance. So that left me with the vampire. Several people turned it down because everybody thought that vampires were over—that they were corny, that they were old-fashioned. And then I got Chris Sarandon. I had to really work to do it. We had dinner, I met with his manager, we went over the script, and I finally convinced him to take the chance with a first-time director, which had him scared. But he loved the part. He saw the potential of the role, and he did a brilliant job.

How about the unforgettable Stephen Geoffreys?

Jackie's casting of Stephen Geoffreys was a brilliant gambit. There was a very famous director who's no longer with us—Colin Higgins—and I had Colin in to look at it. Colin thought that Stephen Geoffreys was over-the-top. He thought Stephen was too big. We [rehearsed] it like a play, and Colin was worried that, if he was that big on stage, he'd be too big for the screen.

We've heard you had some interesting ways of getting the performances you wanted from the cast, notably not allowing William Ragsdale to see the vampire. Any makeup before shooting? Can you elaborate?

We rehearsed for two weeks solid. So we had worked out all of the visuals and any performance questions or problems before we even hit the sound stage. That was because a lot of the shots were FX shots or had to be rigged. Because that took so much time, the actors had to be fully prepped. I had a terrible cast, and they really worked and we were able to do it. We had a very, very tight budget. If you have a two-week rehearsal, at the end of that you have a very tightly knit group of people.

I understood Chris Sarandon contributed a lot of ideas.

He wanted to deepen the character of Jerry. He was looking for a past—a thousand-year past. He contributed the idea of Jerry eating the apple, because that cleaned his fangs, and it gave him a physical object to handle, which rooted his performance in reality. He had the idea of Jerry having been in love with an ancestor of Amy's, and that's why you have the pining that Charley discovers when he's looking through the house. Chris brought a sense of sadness, of the past, of the centuries, to Jerry.

Chris has that great line when Jerry attacks Charley in his bedroom and tells him he's going to give him something he himself never had—a shadow. Yes, I don't think Chris wrote that line, but Chris' segue led to that line. That deepening of character came more out of the rehearsals and the discussions, because we had time to do that. I had time to listen to what the actors said to me, very well.

*Also, Peter Dinklage made of the supposed gay subtext to *Fright Night*. How much of that was intentional, and how much was just the typical homosexuality that finds its way into every vampire script?*

Yes. [Laughs] Evil Ed led to that in a way. He was the nerd, the strange kid, the horror fan, in a way, that's an inch away from being gay. You're the outsider. Anyone who's different is bullied. You can also make that statement when Chris says, "You know, I'm different, too." But it's also because vampires are seductive. Yes, there was a deliberate subtext. But at the same time, it was edgy and interesting. It just seemed to work thematically,





WILLIAM BAGGDALÉ RECALLS STARTING HIS FILM CAREER AS A RELUCTANT MONSTER KILLER.

CHARLEY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER

by MONICA S. KUEBLER

HOW WILLIAM BAGGDALÉ LANDED THE ROLE OF CHARLEY BREWSTER IN THE ORIGINAL *FRIGHT NIGHT*. HE WAS JUST SPENDING HIS DAYS SHOCKING OYSTERS IN A SAN FRANCISCO RESTAURANT.

"I finished acting school and had a few small roles in films and some leads in plays, but Tom Holland's *Fright Night* was his biggest gig yet. Of course, it helped that Baggdalé already worshipped at the altar of horror long before the vampire comedy came along.

"It was a huge fan of the genre as a kid," confesses the actor, who counts *Frankenstein*, *Dracula*, *The Abominable Dr. Phibes*, *Count Yorgo*, *The Legend of Boggy Creek*, *Dark Shadows* and *Night Gallery* among his early favorites. "One of my favorite [*Night Gallery*] episodes involved a rich, spoiled Southern white brat who inherited his aunt's big old plantation and her favorite black African-American butler. Ogie Davis was the butler and Roddy McDowall was the rich guy. I loved the episode so much and told him so years later. I walked around the set calling for the butler in Roddy's heavy Southern accent: 'Porfboy! Porfboy!'"

Baggdalé fondly remembers McDowall as a sweet, humble, dedicated guy who always treated him as an equal and would regale him with personal tales of Hollywood legends he'd known and worked with. Stephen Geoffreys, however, proved to be slightly less amicable, taking a much more methodical approach to his role as weirdo outcast Evil Ed.

"Stephen's method was a bit quirky, from my point of view, but it clearly worked for him," explains Baggdalé. "I was coming at it from the perspective that we were best friends and tried to explore our connection. I think he saw his character—correctly, by the way—as more isolated and estranged. Consequently, Stephen spent a lot of time alone exploring that, I think. I remember once we were trying to find him for a shot, and we couldn't. Someone said they had last seen him hanging out up on the catwalk.... It's dark, high, more than a little spooky. I think that's where the Phantom of the Opera hung out."

Of course, much has been made of *Fright Night*'s intricate and surprisingly effective FX, but for Baggdalé the most difficult scene of the shoot had absolutely nothing to do with makeup, prosthetics or gore.

"We were shooting the scene where I'm running down the stairs to investigate a noise or something and Tom Holland was asking me to go faster, to dramatize the panic," recalls Baggdalé. "As I was running down the stairs, I slipped, sprang up and continued running out of the shot. Off-camera, I rolled my ankle and was injured. I thought it might be a minor sprain or something, as it was beginning to swell. As the medic was checking it out, the sound guy came over and shook his head. 'No, it's broken,' he said. He had heard the bone 'pop' on his earphones."

So, after putting blood, sweat, tears and even a broken foot into the film, how does Baggdalé—who beat out Matthew Broderick for the role, and then went on to a busy career in film and television, including a recent twelve-episode stint on the modern-day western *Justified*—feel about the remake?

"In all honesty, I have mixed emotions," he admits. "I love the original so much and am very protective of it.... I had also put out feelings about doing a cameo in the film. I had read the script and there were one or two parts that would have been really fun. In the end, no one even returned the phone call. I thought that was really bad form, even for a place like Hollywood."

given the characters. Who thought of it? [Laughs] The whole goddamned cast was gay, and I didn't know! Who knew I would write that?

That was before any of them were out, right?

Yeah! Well, Roddy, of course, was famous, but I didn't have a clue about Amanda. I probably would have never picked up on it anyway. I didn't even know that Stephen Geoffreys was gay, for that matter. I don't even think I thought about it that much. Vampires are polymorphous—they don't care who they bite.

One of the most memorable and affecting scenes in the film is when Peter kills Evil Ed. Given the stunts, makeup and special effects, tell us a bit about how difficult it was to shoot that sequence.

It was very uncomfortable for Stephen. We had done it in rehearsal. We knew the tears were there, we knew the emotion was there. Roddy didn't like Stephen. [Laughs] We had done that scene where Stephen flies out the window after he's been burned on the forehead with the cross. Because of the way I was shooting it, they had to do it themselves. Roddy got upset with Stephen and thought that Stephen was manhandling him during the fight. He made some remarks about method actors who weren't disciplined. So that carried over, but I didn't ship Roddy into giving a hell of a performance of Stephen's death.

*You turned down the chance to direct *Fright Night* Part 2. Do you ever wish you had done it?*

Well, I was busy with other things at the time, so Jimmy Lee Wallace wrote and directed it. In some ways I wish I had done it, because then it could have gone on, maybe. We could have had three or four of them. I don't know.

If you had been involved with the sequel, what would you have done with it?

I would have done the resurrection of Jerry Dandridge. I would have brought Chris back. I would've had it happening in the house next door, and I would've had Charley Brewster getting involved again. If I were to do it now, I'd have Charley Brewster move back into the house next door with his children, and the house is once again used to bring back Jerry Dandridge, and it's Evil Ed that does it. That's the story.

**Fright Night* continues to get no-coldie criticism of the slasher genre, but you went on to do a sort-of slasher film yourself with *Cliff's Play*. What are your thoughts on slasher flicks?*

THE ELUSIVE STEPHEN GEOFFREYS ON HIS
FRIGHT NIGHT DAYS, BUT NOT MUCH ELSE...

EVIL IS MY NAME

by DAVE ALEXANDER



STEPHEN GEOFFREYS IS THOUGH TO PIN DOWN, AFTER BEING NOMINATED FOR A TONY AWARD IN 1984. AT AGE 29, HE LAUNCHED A HOLLYWOOD CAREER THAT, OF COURSE, INCLUDED HIS DEFINING ROLE AS EVIL IN **FRIGHT NIGHT**. HE DID A FEW MORE GENRE FILMS, INCLUDING THE ROBERT ENGELAND-DIRECTED **JIVE-FOUL**, BEFORE DISAPPEARING FOR A FEW YEARS AND THEN SPENDING A DECADE AND A HALF WORKING IN GAY ADULT MOVIES.

However, approximately five years ago he started appearing in (indie) horror films again and at the odd genre convention. After an enthusiastic email introduction, he lives up to his elusive reputation, as a couple of weeks pass with several unanswered emails and phone calls. Finally, I get him on the phone to talk *Fright Night*.

"From the first time I read the script, it was something that I could envision having a lot of fun with," he recalls in that familiar, nervous-sounding voice. "There were obvious aspects of the character that pointed towards somebody playing it such as myself—the obvious surface stuff, the gay's a little off and kooky. But I saw the truth of this guy and his life and I identified with that. In a nutshell, it was already written and I just kinda had to memorize the lines and show up sober in front of the camera."

Geoffreys comes across as very self-deprecating, crediting writer/director Tom Holland, his co-stars and the effects crew for the film's success. He even plays down the marathon makeup sessions required to turn him into a werewolf/vampire.

"You're sitting in a chair for hour upon hour," he says. "It gets a little weird having people put their hands all over you for that length of time. But I knew from what I expected the end result to be, it was well worth it."

The actor literally threw himself into the role during his very physical scenes with Roddy McDowall, who apparently couldn't stand him. After some prompting with a couple of on-set stories related by other *Fright Night* alumni, Geoffreys admits to going a little overboard.

"The scene where I jump on Roddy McDowall's back after he bums the cross on my forehead, I think I was a little rough, and Roddy was a little bit delicate, which is fine... In the end it definitely turned out good, and if I can remember correctly, we had a discussion after one of the takes, and Tom said, 'Just keep doing it.'" [Laughs] "Poor Roddy had to suffer my wrath for a couple more takes."

It paid off, and Columbia pushed ahead with a *Fright Night* sequel, despite the absence of Holland. Though there was a part written for Geoffreys initially, and he was contractually obligated to do it, after reading the script he had his lawyer get him out of the film.

"I remember that my part in it was to show up out of nowhere, laughing arbitrarily for no reason, to be the same laugh I did in the first one, just because it worked the first time," he recalls. "Which is kind of the reason they're remaking *Fright Night* now. Tom Holland definitely doesn't go for that and he mentioned several times during shooting that he had no intention of doing a second one. I think, creatively, he got everything out in the first one that he wanted to get out, and did it extraordinarily well, and that was that. The book was closed."

Seconds later, Geoffreys closes the book on an interview when I ask why he left Hollywood while his star was rising, to work in adult films. (In a 1998 interview, he acknowledges this part of his past: in a more recent one he said he'd been doing live theatre, while an online search brings up someone asserting that it was actually Geoffreys' brother who did porn.) I want to know about his return to the genre, including his latest movie, *The Wincing Woman*, based on the story by acclaimed British author Paul Kane. But as soon as the words "adult film" are spoken, he hangs up on me, and that's that.

So, Stephen Geoffreys remains elusive. If he reads this, I hope he knows that, while us horror fans are curious about his career, we're mostly just happy to have him back.

I wouldn't say *Child's Play* was a slasher film. I always thought of it as a story about a woman trying to save her little boy. I thought of it more as a thriller. I'm being very pcayane here, of course. When I did *Fright Night*, it had become rote. The slasher brilliance was Halloween, the first one—Carpenter's. Then it became very successful, and it couldn't be a good of horror movie unless it was a slasher film. You had the Friday the 13th films, you had the Werdens' first movie, which was *The Burning*, a slasher film. Everybody and their brother flooded the market, and they just got boring. *Fright Night* was my reaction to how boring the slasher genre was at the time. But right now, no, I have nothing against it. And God knows, if anybody can refresh anything and bring it back, it's the slasher genre. It's hard to figure out what a slasher film would be right now, isn't it?

*How that vampire are everywhere, do you think it's a good time to remake *Fright Night*, or does it make it a more sleep-inducing endeavor?*

That's hard for me to figure out. I would think that it's a good time. I don't think the genre's exhausted itself yet, but it certainly is headed in that direction. They can't do very much more with vampires, so maybe the two *Twilight* sequels that Bill Condon is directing at the same time, maybe that will be the end of it for a while. I don't know. I feel like *Fright Night*, the remake, is still going to catch the wave because it's so different from any of the stuff that's out there. But it certainly does feel like vampires have been pumped a lot at this point.

*How do you feel about the *Twilight* take on vampires—reluctant, romantic, sparky?*

Terrific. It's sort of the Stephen King impulse to make horror accessible to the middle class. It somehow feels like *Twilight* grew out of Salem's Lot, because what that gal [Stephenie Meyer] did was tape it together with bodice-ripper romances. So all of a sudden, vampires take over more genres that have a broad appeal, and I think that's what *Twilight* does—puts it in the realm of romance.

*Why do you think we're still talking about *Fright Night*, more than a quarter of a century after it first hit theaters?*

Back when it was released in '85, *Fright Night* was given an R rating. Now it seems more like a PG film. It's become this thing that two and three generations are sharing. Back in 1978 or whatever, when you saw *Halloween*, it was considered shocking. Parents would never look at anything like that. "Oh, my God, how terrible it was." Now, 30 years later, parents have grown up with slasher films, so it's become sort of accepted. In other words, horror as we understand it is spreading out through two or three generations. The audience continues to grow for it, and that includes older people, as well. When makes *Fright Night* so terrific—and it makes me sound like an asshole to say this—is that it had a humor and a warmth in it. Even though it has fipples in it that were doing at the time, it's still a family film. I swear to God I don't know how I did it, but everything came together. ♥



STV, R&M: Tom Holland (center) oversees his famous werewolf effects.

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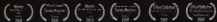
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SMALL TOWN STRANGE

BY MONICA S. KUEBLER

VAMPIRES, ZOMBIES, WITCHES, SHAPE-SHIFTERS, ANGELS, DEMONS, ALIENS, MONSTERS, serial killers and small towns with supernatural secrets are just a few of the entities currently haunting your cable box. Indeed, prime-time television is in the throes of a genre revival with seemingly every network launching its own macabre series in the hope of cornering a share of what's proved to be a very lucrative market.

This latest wave of mostly supernatural programming (see p. 28 for a round-up of terror on TV this fall) began percolating in the 1990s with hit shows such as *The X-Files* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, which helped set the stylistic template for what would follow. But the genre TV renaissance truly came to a head during the last five years with the ongoing success of *Supernatural* and breakout premium cable series *Dexter*, *True Blood* and *The Walking Dead* ultimately paving the way for even more new genre fare, including *Haven*.

The series—which is loosely based on Stephen King's 2005 mystery novel *The Colorado Kid*, about the haunting effects of an unsolved murder—debuted last summer and is currently in the midst of its second season. (It airs on Syfy in the US and Showcase in Canada.) The decades-old crime at the centre of King's story forms the show's overarching mystery, which is made even more mysterious due to the fact that no one can remember what actually happened that day. But that's far from the only weird thing going on in the picturesque Maine town.

"Like any small town it looks all pretty, everything looks fine, and then you hang out there for a while and you get to know some of the weirdos that inhabit that town and you learn about the dark underbelly of this otherwise perfect little joint," says Lucas Bryant, who stars as police officer Nathan Wuornos, a lifetime resident of Haven. "If you hang out even longer, you learn the reasons for those age-old feuds and all the darkness that goes on in town. And that's what's happening in Haven."

The community is being plagued by something the locals refer to as "The Troubles"—special, chance-causing abilities exhibited by some of the residents when they're exposed to extreme stress or trauma. For example, after the death of his wife, a man's shadow detaches itself and goes on a vengeful killing spree. Then there's the boy whose nightmares are causing people to die in inventively grisly ways, a woman whose stormy moods result in equally stormy weather, and another woman who hooks up with a man on a Friday, only to give birth to his offspring on Sunday, draining him of all life in the process.

"The Troubles are unidentified periods in time which causes residents of Haven to go cuckoo," jokes Bryant. But to his co-star Emily Rose (Janichol, who plays Audrey Parker, the former FBI agent who assists him in his investigations, things are a little less cut and dry.

"People say [the Troubles are] superpowers, but it's not like that at all," she explains. "Superpowers are things that people discover and can control about themselves, and the Troubles are things that people don't want to admit are there, are trying to cover up or don't know how to control."

As a result, Haven is the sort of place where huge gaping cracks suddenly appear in the landscape, drawings become the artistic equivalent of voodoo dolls, dead things come back to life and food rots right before the eyes. And as with the best King adaptations, character development never plays second fiddle to the freaky weekly set pieces.

Audrey, for example, is driven by an overwhelming desire, as an orphan, to find her roots. So when the Bureau sends her to Haven to track a





Tangling With The Troubled: Haven's no-on-do-well Duke Crocker (Eric Ballou) watches over a rage-infected Nathan Wuornos (Luke Bryant), and (opposite) Audrey (Emily Rose) lends to a supernaturally aging Duke.

fugitive, and she uncovers evidence that her own past may be linked to the town (a woman who looks exactly like her appears in a photo snapped the morning of the Colorado Kid murder and Audrey suspects it might be her mom), she decides to stay and investigate, eventually turning in her federal credentials to take a position with the local PD.

"What keeps her [there] is the fact that she is really good in this place, that she can help," says Rose. "She feels that she clicks and belongs in that place, and I think that's very interesting to her. Plus, she just can't freakin' figure out what the deal is, what's going on, and I think that's like an itch to her. It bugs her."

With its male/female crime-solving dynamic, monster-of-the-week-style episodes and expansive, mysterious series-defining mythology, never mind its perpetually overcast locale and unresolved sexual tension, companions to *The X-Files* are inevitable. (Haven even pays homage to the series in a first-season episode where Audrey says to her former boss, "At least I'm not like that one guy you trained who was chasing aliens, what was his name?")

But there are also some key differences, the most notable being that even though the Troubled are often behind gruesome injuries and deaths, incarceration and punishment is not necessarily the most frequent outcome. Perhaps that's because Nathan himself is among the ranks of the afflicted—he has no sense of touch and hence is oblivious to pain, which proves to be far less cool than you may imagine, as he often unknowingly injures himself while on the job.

By the end of the first season's thirteen-episode arc (out now on DVD/Blu-ray from Entertainment One), more is known about mysteries at play in Haven, as well as the central characters themselves. We learn that Audrey has an innate way of dealing with the afflicted and is the only person whose touch Nathan can feel. It also becomes evident that the woman in the photo may not be her mother after all—a revelation that is driven home in the first season's final scene when Audrey is confronted by a federal agent who claims to be the real Audrey Parker.

"They withheld from me the information that somebody else was going to come to the beach and say that she was Audrey Parker. I'm actually glad that they did because it really, really shocked me and it was a tough pill to swallow," says Rose.

"It pretty much took everything I knew and ripped it out from underneath me, so I was really kind of like, 'Where do I start now?'... It affects Audrey in [season two] in a very sad way. I think she really battles with believing that: a) who she is, is really her; and b) it puts her in a kind of sad place, it's like grieving your own self. It's really weird."

Likewise, Nathan discovers that his contentious relationship with his father, the police chief (played to grouchy perfection by Nicholas Campbell), may have something to do with the fact that he isn't his father at all. But before he can get all the details, it's too late, and the Reverend, a relatively minor character from the first season who opposes the presence of the Troubled in town, is setting his sights on the top cop position. Bryant reveals that in the second season, the Rev will be a polarizing dark force between the town's two populations and act as a mouthpiece for the haters.

"In season one, Nathan was working under his father and his father kept a lot of things from him," explains Bryant. "He didn't necessarily tell him all the things that he knew about town and what was going on here and didn't really treat him all that well. So for Nathan, since his dad's gone now, it's about discovering who he really is, literally, and also what kind of man he's going to be now that he's out from under his father's thumb."

Don't expect that the Colorado Kid murder or any of Haven's other myriad mysteries will come to speedy conclusions, however, because the show toils extensively in what the characters don't know and the search for answers is absolutely integral to its ongoing plot. As such, Haven parallels its literary source material to a tee.

"When I read *The Colorado Kid*, I was really frustrated by the end of it because I was like, 'God, this doesn't go anywhere,'" says Rose. "Then when I read his afterword to the reader, I was like, 'Gosh, I like you Stephen King, that you actually sat there with the reader and said, 'This is what this story is about, the unsolved mystery that constantly bothers you and won't let you sleep at night.' I really like that he was able to write from that place, not a lot of writers would be brave enough to go there and not tie it up in a bow for the audience.'"



— 2011 —

TV



TERROR GUIDE

by DAVE ALEXANDER, BRENTON BENTZ, PEDRO CABEZUELO,
MONICA S. KUEBLER AND TREVOR TUMINSKI

S MALL-SCREEN SCARES ARE ALL THE RAGE THESE DAYS ON BOTH PREMIUM CABLE and network television, with monsters, murderers and mysterious happenings all vying for prime-time domination. Join us as we take stock of new and returning genre series, and preview what fresh frights they have in store for their fans this year.

AMERICAN HORROR STORY

Created by Ryan Murphy and Brad Falchuk
(NEW SERIES)

The creators of *Glee* and *Nip/Tuck* have shot a reportedly promising pilot for this one-hour drama about a husband and wife (Dylan McDermott and Corinne Britton, respectively) who transplant their family from Boston to San Francisco for a fresh start after suffering through a miscarriage and an affair. But their troubles don't end there; turns out their new digs are haunted! Tentatively set to air this fall on FX (though no official date has been announced at press time), the show—which the creators claim has had its writing team re-exploring what's scary—will definitely feature creature and an impressive supporting cast, which includes Jessica Lange as a neighbour whose daughter is well-versed in the house's creepy history, Tessa Ferrera as the couple's whip-smart goth daughter and Evan Peters as a mysterious, dashing young cult leader. **T**

BEING HUMAN

Created by Toby Whithouse
S.2

It may sound like the beginnings of a joke—a vampire, a werewolf and a ghost shack up together—but it's actually the basis for *Being Human*. The show, which first rose to popularity in Britain, got the American remake treatment earlier this year and proved to be one of Syfy's most successful titles to date. The series is about monsters making an honest go at being human, which is, as the tagline suggests, "harder than it looks." First season sees the vampire's life constantly interrupted by brutish blood-sucker politics, while the werewolf is forced to deal with the sudden appearance of his slovenly creator. The ghost, meanwhile, must solve her own murder. Surprisingly accomplished, the series covers narrative ground much faster than its BBC counterpart (*BW* 102), so it'll be interesting to see where it goes once it no longer has the British scripts to crib from. *Being Human* returns January 2012. **MSK**

DEXTER

Developed by James Manners, Jr.
S.6

This long-running Showtime series follows the exploits of Miami blood-spatter expert/serial killer Dexter Morgan (Michael C. Hall, *Six Feet Under*). Dexter's no run-of-the-mill slasher, however; he follows a rigorous moral code taught to him by his adoptive cop father, Harry. As such, Dexter only hunts other killers. The series features a first-person narrative by the title character that offers insight into how difficult it is for him to lead a normal life and hold his murderous tendencies in check. Based on the book series by Jeff Lindsay (*AM* 77), the show's debut season follows the plot of the first novel before veering into completely new narrative territory in subsequent episodes. Season 6 will feature action rapper Mos Def as an ex-con who has found religion and Edward James Olmos as Professor Galt, a religious studies teacher who, like Dexter, is a serial killer with purpose, which will inevitably force our favourite murderer to question and explore his own raison d'être. **BB**

DOCTOR WHO

Created by Sydney Newman, C. E. Webber
and Donald Wilson
S. 6

Doctor Who is listed in Guinness World Records as the longest-running sci-fi TV series in history, and since the show's return in 2005 at the hands of then-showrunner Russell T. Davies, it has leapt to new heights of popularity, setting viewership records on both BBC America and Canada's Space network. Much of *Doctor Who*'s appeal lies in the series' format: the Doctor is a 900-year-old Time Lord able to traverse anywhere and anytime in the universe with his trusty spaceship time machine TARDIS. The series has embraced the horror genre in particular. In the last six years, viewers have been treated to werewolves, zombies, killer scarecrows, flying sharks, living statues and even the Devil himself. The first half of Season 6 (which aired this May/June) introduced the Silence, a race of aliens who secretly live on Earth manipulating world events. They've managed to stay hidden for thousands of years because once a human stops observing them, the aliens are erased from the viewer's mind. The second half of the season is due to air this fall. PG

FALLING SKIES

Created by Robert Rodat
(NEW SERIES)

It's official: Steven Spielberg has aliens on the brain again, and he's been slamm'n' it all *War of the Worlds*-like on the box as executive producer of this alien invasion series that debuted this past June on TNT. Mosh Wolfe of *ER* stars as a former Boston University professor whose wife was killed and one of his three sons abducted in the wake of a worldwide alien attack that killed off 90 percent of the population. Now he's second-in-command of the human resistance as they attempt to survive and form some semblance of society. If you were to surmise that this show sounds a lot like an extraterrestrial version of *The Walking Dead*, you might be onto something. A Darkhouse Comics prequel graphic novel is already sold out and the two-hour premiere drew some 5.9 million viewers, ranking it cable's #1 new series in 2011. TT

GRIMM

Created by David Greenwalt
and Jim Kouf
(NEW SERIES)

From the executive producers of *Angel* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* comes the unusual hour-long cop drama that supposes the characters and creatures from the Brothers Grimm's dark fairy tales are not only real but exist in modern times. Tasked with stopping them is homicide detective Nick Burkhardt (David Grint), who learns from an old aunt that he's the last remaining

descendant of the "Grimms," a centuries-old family of monster slayers. Forget serial killers, child molesters and crack whores. Try slapper! cuffs on werewolves, trolls and other mythological creatures vying to infect their fantastical wrath on humanity. At press time, a specific number of episodes had yet to be announced, but a confirmed appearance at the 2011 San Diego Comic-Con in late July was set to precede the show's debut on Friday nights this fall on NBC. TT

LOST GIRL

Created by M.A. Levitt
S. 2

Sick of the usual monsters? How about succubi? *Lost Girl* stars the flawlessly beautiful Anna Silk as Bo, a succubus who's lived among humans her whole life and knows almost nothing of her powers or her origin. Turns out, succubi are a type of fairy and there's a whole supernatural society functioning right alongside ours. Once introduced to that world, Bo refuses to pick a side (light or dark) and starts helping desperate fairies out of nasty supernatural predicaments en-stead (with the help of her plucky sidekick Kendi, and Dyson, a hot cop who can shift into a wolf), while continuing to search for answers to her own mysteries. The sex-fueled, malevolent fairies concept proved compelling enough to get this Canadian series renewed for a second season. It was also picked up by US network Syfy earlier this year. MSG

SUPERNATURAL

Created by Eric Kripke
S. 7

Supernatural follows the adventures of brothers Sam and Dean Winchester as they hunt pernicious spirits and supernatural creatures across America. Early seasons have a monster-of-the-week feel as the duo searches for their missing father, though the plot arc is closed when the boys are reunited with their dad, who gives up his life to save Dean's. The series later explores Judeo-Christian themes as it introduces angels, demons and sees the brothers attempting to prevent the biblical apocalypse. The first five seasons were helmed by creator Eric Kripke (who had intended to end the show after five years). He remains an executive producer. Season 6 saw a return to the show's roots with the brothers hunting Alphas (i.e., the first monsters) while also continuing the biblical storyline. Nothing substantial has been revealed about Season 7 yet. BB

TODD & THE BOOK OF P. RE EVIL

Created by Anthony Leo, Charles Picco
and Craig David Wallace
S. 2

With *FEARnet* bringing aspiring metal god Todd Smith and his gang of monster-fighter



Network Nightmares: (from top) *Dexter*, *Doctor Who*, *Falling Skies*, *Supernatural*, and (inset) *Being Human*



TRUE BLOOD

Created by Alan Ball

S.4

Based on the best-selling series of novels by mystery writer Charlaine Harris, HBO's breakout supernatural serial *True Blood* (*RMF/10*) takes place after the bloodsuckers have announced their presence to mankind and are attempting to integrate into society — not a smooth transition, it turns out. Additional plotlines feature shoplifters, witches and a variety of other creatures that lurk in and around Bon Temps, Louisiana. Sex between mortals and supes, bloodshed and bloodsucking, drugs, murder, violence — almost nothing is taboo on *True Blood*, making it not only one of the hottest shows on cable TV, but also one of HBO's biggest hits. **MSK**

THE VAMPIRE DIARIES

Created by Kevin Williamson and Julie Plec

S.3

This vampire show (based on a series of YA novels by L.J. Smith) seems eternally doomed to be written off as *Twilight* on television, but its similarity begins and ends with the human/vampire love triangle at its epicenter and the second season introduction of werewolves. The larger plot arc sees a town that's been at war with vampires for generations, with Elena (Nina Dobrev), the show's teenage human heroine, being equally valuable to the vampires and the weres (as an occult object that could release their curse/grant them more power). A dark high-school/small-town drama with monsters, murder, mayhem and more double-crosses and twists than should nightly be allowed, as well as a jaw-dropping cliffhanger at the end of almost every episode, make it more like *True Blood* like than *Twilight* anything. **MSK**

THE WALKING DEAD

Created by Robert Kirkman and Frank Darabont

S.2

Nothing was bigger for TV horror last year than *The Walking Dead* (*RMF/10*), the Frank Darabont-helmed (joke!) adaptation of Robert Kirkman's much celebrated zombie apocalypse comic book series of the same name. The six-episode first season saw small-town cop Rick Grimes (Andrew Lincoln) reunite with his family and become the leader of a group of survivors camped just outside of zombie-infested Atlanta. They eventually make their way to a CDC (Center for Disease Control) bunker, only to be thrust back into the dangerous countryside. Season 2's thirteen episodes see them finding refuge at a farm, and promises more violent human drama, gore effects by Greg Nicotero's team and hopefully the return of Michael Rooker's one-handed raging redneck character! **DA**



Serial Thrillers: (Clockwise from top left) *The Walking Dead*, *The Vampire Diaries*, *True Blood*, *Lost Girl*, *Torchwood*, and (inset) *Todd & The Book of Pure Evil*

medits to American small screens starting this month, it's unlikely this hybrid of *The Evil Dead*, *The Breakfast Club* and *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* (which we featured in *RMF/10*) will remain Canada's best-kept secret for very long. After leaving us hanging at the end of the hilarious first season, word out of Crowley High is that production on Season 2 has just begun, the titular tome is set to conjure all sorts of buzzkill-inducing beaches for our herb-lovin' heroes, including "a killer birthday cake, skin snatchers, deadly nerds" and the necessity of staging a rock opera so epic that it's gonna take the cast of *Glee* back to bitch school. **TT**

ORCHWOOD

Created by Russell T Davies

S.4

A testament to the popularity of Doctor Who, spin-off show *Torchwood* features immortal time traveler Captain Jack Harkness, a character who initially debuted in the first season of the reborned Who. He's the head of one of the branch offices of the Torchwood Institute, a top-secret agency tasked with the preven-

tion of malevolent extraterrestrial incursions into our world. The *Children of Earth* miniseries took the place of a proper third season last year and most of the show's original cast were killed off. The Season 4 miniseries, a British-US co-production currently airing on Starz, sees remaining characters Harkness (John Barrowman) and Gwen Cooper (Eve Miles) joined by several new American cast members. Titled *Miracle Day*, the ten-episode arc concerns the string of events that are set into motion when everyone on Earth suddenly stops dying. **MSK**

OTHER GENRE SHOWS CURRENTLY AIRING ON A TV NEAR YOU: the third season of *Space/Sly's* supernatural fantasy series *Sanctuary* (with a fourth season already in production), an adaptation of the 1985 movie *Teen Wolf* and a scripted horror-comedy called *Death Valley* on MTV, and *Terra Nova* — about a family in the year 2149 who time-travels to help stop an Earth extinction event. There's also a couple of noteworthy pilots currently making the rounds: Poe, a one-hour crime drama that chronicles Edgar Allan Poe as the world's first detective in 1840s Boston, and *Awakening* — a series centered around a zombie uprising, described by its Canadian creators as *The Vampire Diaries* meets *The Walking Dead*. One thing's for sure: with this many genre shows on deck, it's fair to conclude the boob tube brain trusts have realized that we're simply ravenous for escapist scores and celestial diversions. Read into that what you will. **—R**

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BODY WORLDS CREATOR

GUNTHER VON HAGENS

ON MORBID ART, CONTROVERSIAL
SCIENCE AND FACING DOWN HIS
OWN MORTALITY.



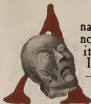
ANATOMY

Divine

by Nadja Sayej

with photos by Dave Alexander

Fig. 1A



naked figure stands with its arms held high in the air, a ballerina with no skin. Its bicep muscles are outstretched like pink tendrils up toward its ears. The extended pose doesn't seem to bother this body, however. It's a masterpiece of art and science.

It is also not the only one. At *Body Worlds & The Story of the Heart*—an exhibition currently staged in a converted warehouse in Berlin, Germany—dozens of anonymous humans have been “plastinated,” a process invented by “controversial German anatomist” (as Wikipedia calls him) Dr. Gunther von Hagens, in which the biological tissue is preserved and put on display.

The 66-year-old scientist—whose dark-ringed, beady blue eyes, deep stare and trademark black fedora give him more the look of a screen villain or grave digger—may slice skulls like Da Vinci, polish eyeballs like Picasso and warp muscular bodies into extraordinary athletic poses like Egon Schiele, but don't go calling him an artist.

“First of all, I am a medical doctor and consider myself a scientist, not an artist,” he tells *Rue Morgue* in an exclusive email interview. “At the most, my work could be seen as anatomy art, what I define as the aesthetic didactic presentation of the body interior.”

Born in Skalmierzycze, Poland, von Hagens settled in Germany, receiving a doctorate from the University of Heidelberg in 1975 before working as a medical lecturer at its anatomical and pathological institutes for more than twenty years. It was there, in 1977, that he invented plastination, though his Institute for Plastination wouldn't be founded until 1993. It wasn't until the late 1990s that the first humans underwent the process, with each one taking over 1500 hours to complete.

Today, more than 32 million wide-eyed and gasping people throughout Taiwan, Switzerland, Germany, Denmark, the US and Canada have borne witness to the roughly 200 instances of preserved humans (including pregnant women), horses, elephants and gorillas that make up each of the many incarnations of the touring *Body Worlds* exhibit (for more, see *RM#57*). The skinless specimens, which appear either whole or in part (sometimes showcasing one or more diseased organs), are anything but typical anatomical fare. Splashes of imagination in their arrangement—not to mention the recurring realization that the individuals in question were once living, breathing people—elevate each piece beyond its formal, structured presentation.

“Plastinates, like works of art, are bestowed with an aesthetic effect and an emotional value,” says von Hagens, adding that 68% of visitors to the exhibits leave with valuable incentives for a healthier lifestyle (some are

noted to drink and smoke less). “The authenticity of the specimens particularly contributes to the fascination of the exhibition. Especially in today's media world, where citizens increasingly receive indirect information, the individual is very well aware that the copy is always mentally ‘pre-digested’ and therefore is an interpretation. In this respect, *Body Worlds* satisfies people's great yearning for pure originality.”

For example, 2006's *The Archer* has a woman posed with a bow, her arm muscles visibly stretched, her skull sliced open in three separate places and her brain balancing on top of her head. In a piece from 2000 called *Muscle Man With Skeleton And Child*, a hunchbacked youngster with elfish ears holds onto one of its parents' blood-red hands while the other caregiver has been completely stripped of muscle and tissue. And the glass-encased *Athlete* is in the midst of a track and field race, jumping over a hurdle with a perfectly arrow-pointed erection (the source of his excitement unclear, though maybe it's us).

Predictably, von Hagens' work has elicited some strong reactions. While he notes that *Body Worlds'* admission fee of roughly \$20 US per person funds ongoing research and development “primarily in the field of healthy and diseased topographic anatomy,” his exhibits and the plastination process itself have long been frowned upon by the Catholic Church and numerous Jewish rabbis who object to the display of human remains. Despite the controversy, von Hagens performed the first public autopsy in 170 years to a sold-out theatre crowd in the UK back in 2002—a criminal act according to Her Majesty's Inspector of Anatomy. Though police showed up, no charges were laid. As always, von Hagens sported his trademark fedora—just like the anatomist slicing open his patient in the 1632 oil painting by Rembrandt that



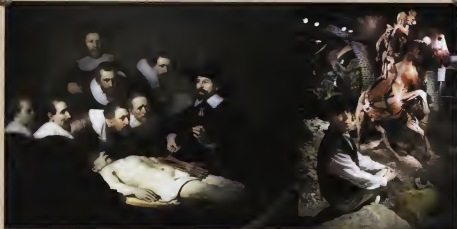


Photo provided by Body Worlds

*The Remains Of The Day: Rembrandt's 1632 oil painting *The Anatomy Lesson Of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp*, Dr. Gunther von Hagens and his plastinate titled *Resting Horse And Rider*, and (below and previous) photos taken with special permission at the *Body Worlds Story of the Heart* exhibit in Toronto, 2009.*

serves as his inspiration, *The Anatomy Lesson Of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp*.

Sadly, von Hagens will pass into history himself sooner rather than later, as he officially announced this past January that he has been suffering through the advanced stages of Parkinson's disease.

"I can no longer hide the symptoms," he admits. "My hands tremble, my language is vague, my movements are uncoordinated. Again and again, I stumble around like a child. Parkinson's has definitely changed my life since I was diagnosed two years ago. I have begun to take leave of skulls I once had, knowing that they will never come back. I have struggled daily with the disabilities, the disease relentlessly pushed into consciousness."

Since being diagnosed, von Hagens allows himself to relax more — even take vacations, such as a recent expedition across the Antarctic. He is also exploring the more aesthetic side of his practice, which seems to have resulted in a change of heart regarding plastination's artistic possibilities.

"I still have plans!" he insists. "I want to spend my remaining productive years developing a digital anatomical atlas, a contemporary version of

DONATING MY BODY FOR PLASTINATION GIVES MY DEATH A KIND OF CONSOLIDATING ASPECT.

**DR.
GUNTHER VON
HAGENS**

Renaissance anatomist, Vesalius Fabrica. I would also like to create a new body of work reconciling human anatomy and art that I'm calling 'aesthetic anatomy' for exhibitions destined for art museums."

Reflecting upon his own mortality, the scientist says he will be proud to join the army of 12,500 volunteers who have willed their bodies to be plastinated since he began the donation program back in 1983.

"This is so important to me because I want to set a good example," he says, with a palpable sense of enthusiasm. "Donating my body for plastination gives my death a kind of consolidating aspect since, as a plastinate, I will be able to continue what I have done all my professional life: to teach anatomy."

He adds that, chances are, his wife Angelina Whalley, who is the curator of all the *Body Worlds* shows, will be the one to plastinate him, after which he will be displayed in a welcoming gesture at one of the exhibition's entrances.

"In that way," he says, "I can greet our visitors with a pre-recorded welcome message for all times to come."



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IN ANTICIPATION OF THIS MONTH'S **FINAL DESTINATION 5**, WE'VE ROUNDED UP THE FRANCHISE'S TOP TEN KILLS TO PROVE THAT DEATH NEVER TAKES A HOLIDAY.

FEAR THE REAPER

BY LAST CHANCE LANCE



HUNG OUT TO DRY

FINAL DESTINATION (2000)

After surviving a horrific plane crash that claims the lives of 287 people, Tod (Chad Donella) slips on a wet bathroom floor and gets strung up by a clothesline in his bathtub. With his bare feet slithering on the tub's soapy surface and a pair of scissors agonizingly just out of reach, Tod's eyes bulge and his face reddens as he's slowly strangled to death. This scene set the tone for all of the creative kills to come as Tod took his place as Death's very first reclaimed victim.



THIRD TIME'S THE HARM

FINAL DESTINATION

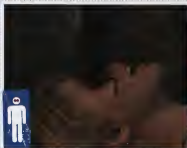
Another crash survivor (Kristen Cloke) is home alone, drowning her sorrows with a mug full of booze, when Death shows up to crash her private party. The mug cracks, spilling alcohol into her computer, causing an electrical short and explosion, which fires a shard of glass into her neck. With blood pouring out of the wound, she crawls to the kitchen and reaches for a dish towel, only to pull a set of sharp knives down onto herself, one of which pierces her chest. Although it's not a fatal wound, it soon becomes one when a chair falls onto the knife, plunging it further in still — just before the entire house blows up due to a gas leak.



OFF THE RAILS

FINAL DESTINATION

Billy (Sean William Scott) not only sidesteps death in the plane crash, but also escapes from a stalled car that's demolished by a speeding train. Though, just when he thinks that he's dodged Death's sinister design, a sharp scrap of shrapnel from the wreckage shoots out from under the train and decapitates him in front of his friends. His headless body takes a step or two before crumpling to the ground.



SPAGHETTI AND EYEBALLS

FINAL DESTINATION 2 (2003)

Evan (David Paetkau) was having a pretty lucky day. Not only did he win the lottery, he also survived a massive multiple car pile-up on the freeway, which claimed a couple dozen lives. But his luck soon runs out when Death decides to make him his bitch. After freeing his hand from the kitchen garbage disposal and starting a grease fire that he can't put out, he books it out of his apartment, only to slip on some spaghetti and have the ladder from the fire escape smash down on his face, piercing his skull right through the eye sockets.



YOUR ASS IS GLASS

FINAL DESTINATION 2

As if visiting the dentist to have a cavity drilled out wasn't horrifying enough, Tim (James Kirk), who also survived the aforementioned highway disaster, almost meets his maker when an electrical short nearly causes him to pass out from a nitrous oxide overdose and choke to death on a rubber fish that falls into his mouth from an overhead mobile. Luckily, the dentist's assistant plucks it out just in time and he's able to leave in one piece. Unluckily, just as he steps outside, he's crushed to death by a huge sheet of plate glass dropped by a construction crew working overhead.



CHUNKS AHOY!

FINAL DESTINATION 2

Rory (Jonathan Cherry) survives the highway accident, as well as another mishap, which nearly sees him impaled by a load of pipes being transported on a trailer, but he soon meets an amazingly gruesome end. When fuel from a punctured gas tank is ignited by a dropped cigarette, it causes a nearby van to explode, hurling a section of barbed-wire fencing right at Rory, who is neatly severed into several wet chunks.



DEATH WARMED OVER

FINAL DESTINATION 3 (2006)

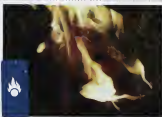
The weakest of the *FD* franchise and the only entry to feel the need to show prolonged scenes of gratuitous frontal nudity, this outing's saving grace is a fairly fabulous double death. Ashley and Ashlyn (Chelan Simmons and Crystal Lowe) survive a roller coaster disaster and celebrate in true bimbo fashion, by going to the tanning salon. Things really heat up when they slip down and climb into their tanning beds, only to become trapped after an overhead shelf falls. The beds malfunction, and the girls are subsequently cooked to a crisp.



GOING... DOWN

FINAL DESTINATION 3

Tim's sister Nora (Lyndia Boyd) is desperately trying to hold her life together after walking away from that same car accident when she's warned that a man with hooks might kill her. The warning becomes all the more potent when she later finds herself on an elevator with a creepy old dude, who is carrying a box filled with artificial limbs, including arms with nasty-looking hooks for hands. In a desperate attempt to flee, her hair becomes tangled on one of his hooks, and her head is wedged between the elevator doors just as they close. The elevator starts to move up to the next floor and she is gruesomely decapitated, showering everyone in the vicinity in a geyser of blood.



DAG RACIST

THE FINAL DESTINATION (2009)

This time it's a devastating crash at a race-car track that a small group of survivors manage to escape, only to eventually meet their maker one by one. When a red-neck racist decides to exact some payback on a black security guard he blames for his girlfriend's death, his plans to burn a cross on the guard's front lawn go horribly awry. He gets caught on the hook of his runaway tow truck and is dragged down the street, catching fire via spilled gasoline and blowing up in a blast of flames and blood that leaves his decapitated head at the feet of his would-be victim.

GOING TO PIECES

THE FINAL DESTINATION

An auto mechanic who also survived the racetrack smash-up laughs off the warnings of his imminent death, only to kick the bucket in one of the most brutal death scenes in the entire franchise. Although he escapes being crushed by a vehicle in his shop that rolled off of a lift, his supremely gory demise occurs when a hurling acetylene canister propels him through a chain-link fence, which slices his body into bloody cubes that slowly plop to the ground.



FINAL DESTINATION 5 COMES OUT AUGUST 12 FROM WARNER BROS.

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THE ROUTH OF BADNESS

DYLAN DOG: DEAD OF NIGHT

Starring Brandon Routh, Sam Huntington and Taye Diggs
Directed by Kevin Munroe
Written by Thomas Dean Donnelly, Joshua Oppenheimer
and Tiziana Sclavi
Fox

Dylan Dog: Dead of Night—the subtitle implies the first of an ongoing series. Fat chance, seeing as it earned approximately \$4.5 million at the box office, on a \$20 million budget. Esp. Given the popularity of comic book adaptations right now, that's quite a feat of fuckupery.

But don't blame the source material. The film is based on Italy's most popular ongoing comic series, about a supernatural private detective—think Darren McGavin's *Night Stalker* character in the crime-noir world of a Dashiell Hammett story—which we've already had a taste of thanks to 1995's excellent *Cemetery Man*, the surreal horror-comedy starring Rupert Everett. If you've read any of Dark Horse's English-language adaptations of the series, you know that Dylan (named after poet Dylan Thomas) is a ragged, morose bohemian, carrying all sorts of emotional baggage, who's constantly thrown into hu-

manous supernatural situations. There's also a touch of the surreal in the comic (e.g., the character's screaming doorbell, his Groucho Marx-like assistant), which is absent here.

With its quirky characters, ironic one-liners, rubber-suit monsters and mystical-object-threatens-the-world narrative, *Dead of Night* is like an over-plotted episode of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Dylan (Brandon Routh), with the help of cowardly sidekick Marcus (Sam Huntington, who's fun to watch), investigates a murder that throws him back into the supernatural

world from which he retired after some bad shit went down. It's a place where vampires own nightclubs, werewolves work at meat-packing plants and zombies can show for black-market body parts. Cool stuff, but as our heroes try to find a dagger capable of unleashing a super demon, the double crosses cross each other out and Dylan gets tossed into walls by monsters with tedious regularity.

And forget the bad lighting and dialogue—pin this one on a hero without any edge. Routh,

who was perfect as Clark Kent/Superman (two of the starchiest characters ever created) in *Superman Returns*, is a boring Dylan Dog. He never bruises, he's got a nice, pretty face and, when not baffling evil, ap-

parently spends his time waxing and tanning his buff chest. He's more smarm than charm, and worst of all never seems to be in any real danger—a detective so soft-boiled, someone should dip a piece of toast in him.

Sneak out the comic, see what could've been, and try not to get a headache from slapping yourself on the forehead.

DAVE ALEXANDER

HARRIS AND HENRIKSEN DO NOT A HENRY MAKE

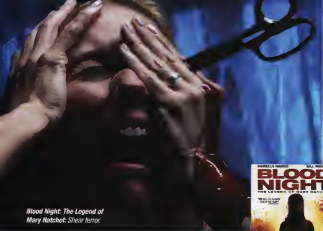
CYRUS: MIND OF A SERIAL KILLER

Starring Brian Krause, Danielle Harris and Lance Henriksen
Written and directed by Mark Vadik
Anchor Bay

It isn't *Henry*—it isn't even *Ed Gein*—but this serial killer origin story, based on "shocking true events," isn't a total write-off either. The second feature from writer/director Mark Vadik racks up a satisfying body count (and a pretty decent cast) with what is obviously a criminally tiny budget.

The film begins as tabloid journalist Maria (Danielle Harris) investigates the rural Midwestern legend of Cyrus "The County Line Cannibal" (Brian Krause). Without much in the way of eyewitness accounts, Maria gets a call from a mysterious tow truck driver named Emmett (Lance Henriksen), who claims to have known Cyrus personally. Over a lengthy inter-





Blood Night: The Legend of Mary Hatchet: Shear terror

view, Emmett recounts, in uncanny detail, the story of the notorious killer and the gruesome fate of his last victims.

Emmett isn't the first person that Maria manages to interview on the topic of serial killers. In fact, Cyrus' story is intercut with footage of academics and convicted murderers alike, all speaking to the futilities of serial killing — a directional move that adds a sense of realism to the film, which is amplified by its no-frills cinematography. The interviews also provide some depth to Cyrus (why does a serial killer kill?); it's proffered in the fantastic narration of Henriksen's Emmett, but lacking from Krause's somewhat superficial performance. The final "twist" can be seen coming a mile away (a bare-bones synopsis damn near spoils it), but it nonetheless allows Vadik to accomplish something slightly original with his serial killer film.

As has become tradition, the "based on true events" label is applied loosely here. More likely, it seems that the screenplay was concocted after the systematic blending and recycling of a handful of better "true life" serial killer flicks — with the addition of that aforementioned twist. Held together by fantastic performances from Henriksen and Harris, *Cyrus* is a largely forgettable — but not entirely regrettable.



DENVER WILSON

PERIOD FILM

BLOOD NIGHT: THE LEGEND OF MARY HATCHET

Starring Danielle Harris, Bill Moseley and Rale Dushku
Directed by Frank Sabatella
Written by Elke Blank and Frank Sabatella
Lionsgate

Here's some advice: If ever you get the urge to buy tampons, dunk them in stage blood and offer

them on the site of a historic murder that spawned a local legend, wait until a few days after the anniversary of the crime.

That way, you can avoid the vengeful ghost who will chop you and your friends to bits with an axe. Or an icepick. Or scissors. The characters in Frank Sabatella's *Blood Night* apply no such logic, and pay dearly for it.

The film begins with twelve-year-old Mary stabbing her mother's eyes out with a pair of scissors in a scene that's lit like a giallo, oozes like an H.G. Lewis flick and shimmies like a music video. A number of years later, we catch up with Mary in her new digs at the local sanatorium, where she's raped and impregnated by a sleazy orderly. After losing her child at birth, she messily cleanses the hospital of its staff and gets gunned down by a couple of cops outside of the facility. Years later, the townies have made an annual tradition of desecrating the site of the murders, and tampon sales are through the roof.

After engaging in said tradition, our generic pack of killer fodder (including eminent scream queen Danielle Harris) unwinds with some booze, nookie and a 16mm screening of *Attack of the Killer Tomatoes*. After a few of them are gruesomely dispatched, the remaining partners (and a drunken cemetery worker, hilariously played by Bill Moseley) make their way to the mental hospital and face the naked, hatchet-wielding spectre of Bloody Mary herself.

With *Blood Night*, emerging horror auteur Sabatella doesn't try to give us something heavy or deep — just a straight-up supernatural slasher that's as entertaining as it is graphic, which makes it a pleasant surprise for a direct-to-video title. There's enough tasty, practical gore gags here to make this ultimately unoriginal effort a genuinely

fun way to spend 93 minutes. Heck, Moseley even calls someone a "dog dick," and that never gets old.

So, is it a bad idea to mock a vitriolic spirit with a box of tampons? Always.

TAL ZIMMERMAN

'89 PROBLEMS

BLOOD JUNKIE

Starring Nick Sommer, Emily Treloir and Mike Johnson
Written and directed by Drew Rosas
Troma

The cool things we horror fans associate with the 1980s — cinematic sex and violence — were really just holdovers from the '70s with a more garish colour scheme, and dumbed down even further for easy consumption by an increasingly less discerning audience. This is a point filmmaker Drew Rosas appears to have missed entirely with *Blood Junkie*, a love letter to '80s slasher films that feels a lot more like junk mail.

Rosas sets his film in 1989, which is even worse because it's not just the '80s but specifically a year when anyone with a lick of sense or a shred of good taste was well and truly fed up and couldn't wait for the decade to end. He presents us with four vapid, unlikable teens and a bratty kid on a weekend camping trip in Wisconsin who run about in a disfigured killer who lives in an abandoned chemical testing facility. Well, at least that's what happens eventually, but only after 40 minutes of gawdawful dialogue and a parade of the worst fashion crimes of the late 20th century. We get only the briefest of nudity from patently obvious body doubles before the profoundly uninspired and poorly staged chase scenes and murders finally get underway, and then it's over.

Since Rosas is clearly incapable of distinguishing baby from bath water, I'll close with a memo to any other filmmakers who want to milk the nostalgia cycle: Fifties nostalgia was huge in the '70s because a new generation of teens was discovering early rock 'n' roll, hot rods and poodle skirts, and categorically not because anyone wanted to relive stifling Eisenhower-era conservatism or the threat of nuclear war. Similarly, the '80s craze in the '80s stemmed from an appetite for psychedelic music, recreational drugs and casual sex that wasn't associated with AIDS. It was not because anyone wanted to re-experience race riots or the Vietnam War. Ergo, should you choose to mine a decade with considerably less to recommend it than that most, you need to cherry-pick your pop culture tropes more judiciously. Bring on the sex and violence, bearing in mind that most of us would happily forego midgets, acid-wash jeans and shit music.

JOHN VIK BOWEN



TOWNHOUSE OF THE DEVIL

EXORCISMUS

Starring Sophie Vavasseur, Stephen Billington
and Richard Fells
Directed by Manuel Carballo
Written by David Mulick
IFC Midnight

If exorcism movies have taught us anything about the Devil, it's that he's a liar liar with his brimstone pants on fire. At every turn he'll try to trick you, mess with your head, fill you with self-doubt and betray you. This, of course, makes him perfect to work in marketing.

The Dark Lord's claw prints are all over *Exorcismus*, the latest foray into the revitalized possession genre. See that cool cover image? Well, that ain't the girl who stars in the film, Sophie Vavasseur (*Resident Evil: Apocalypse*), who has much shorter blonde hair, as the lead here, as Emma, a British teenager who plays with an old Ouija board one night and gets a bad case of the Devil. Initially, director Manuel Carballo does a great job of selling the girl's gradual possession, as she has believable blackouts, seizures and then full-blown supernatural episodes (Pyl: levitating in the kitchen wall, in fact, convince your family that something's up.) Her uncle Christopher (Stephen Billington: *Resident Evil*, a degraded Catholic priest who saw a girl in his cane die during an exorcism, is seemingly Emma's only hope and moves into the family home to begin the lengthy process of driving out the demon.

Maybe you noticed that the film was penned by David Mulick, screenwriter of Guillermo del Toro's brilliant *The Devil's Backbone*. That's proof of quality, right? Wrong. *Exorcismus* has its creepy moments — many of 'em thanks to Vavasseur's diabolical multiple personality performance — but the plot descends rather quickly from compelling to cliché and then to downright silly. Remember that *Looney Tunes* cartoon where Ralph Wolf and Sam the Sheepdog eat lunch together and converse pleasantly while off the clock, but once they punch-in Sam spends the day throttling Ralph? It's like that. Christopher and Emma eat breakfast together and then go upstairs, where he lies her to a chair and invites her inner demon with his crucifix, hoping that she'll stop picking off family members. C'mon.

Oh, and if you're tempted by Doug "Pinhead" Bradley's name on the DVD cover, be warned: his screen time amounts to a cameo. Doug's not here right now, which just goes to show that the Devil's in the marketing.

DAVE ALEXANDER

DEATH COMES CRAWLING

MONGOLIAN DEATH WORM

Starring Sean Patrick Flanery, Drew Waters
and Victoria Pratt
Directed by Steven R. Monroe
Written by Kevin Leeson, Neil Elman and Steven R. Monroe
Lionsgate

A film about the five-foot-long burrowing cryptological creature *olgo-khonok*, a bright red Mongo-

Exorcismus: The Devil made Emma (Sophie Vavasseur) do it.



lian death worm that spits an acid-like substance capable of killing people on contact, sounds like a good

idea for a creature feature (after all, *Tremors* was a success twenty years ago). But in the hands of the Syfy network, little of the cryptid's menacing mythology remains. Instead, viewers are left with basically an *Alien* *Quaterman*-style quest for treasure.

When an American oil company sets up shop in the Mongolian desert, its drilling awakens the nominal squirming grubs. Enter Daniel Upton (Sean Patrick Flanery: *Saw 3D*), a fortune hunter searching for the worms because he buys into the local legend that they're guardians of Genghis Khan's tomb. Hired by a pair of physicians to transport medicine to a local village ravaged by a plague, Upton's quest puts both the doctors and the innocent villagers in danger when he must choose between retrieving the tomb's cache of riches and destroying the deadly invertebrates (and Khan's final resting place with them).

Although creature features of the past celebrate kitchy monsters with equally campy storylines, *Mongolian Death Worm* tries to root its tale firmly in the real world, often downplaying its more over-the-top elements. Ourky characters abound, notably a Mongolian lawman (George Cheung) who resembles a Texan sheriff complete

with a white Stetson and a 4x4 truck. But this nod to the South isn't surprising since Texas served as a stand-in for Mongolia. No wonder the landscape seems off, the locals a little too clean and there's not a yak in sight. The writers also chose to ignore much of the death worm legend, instead depicting the creatures as hulking monsters complete with a queen.

Yet amongst all this movie misdirection, Flanery's performance as the likeable scoundrel Upton helps

the film retain some credibility. (The actor has had plenty of practice depicting heroic adventurers — he portrayed a young Indiana Jones in the TV series of the same name.) But is it enough to make *Mongolian Death Worm* anything more than a Sunday afternoon time-waster? You may experience a minor case of the creepy crawlies at best.

JASON FICHONSKY

FATAL ART ATTACK

FALL DOWN DEAD

Starring Dominique Swain, Udo Kier and David Carradine
Directed by Jon Kuyper
Written by Roy Sallows
Image

Horror fans are no strangers to questionable plot turns or characters making bad decisions — venturing into the woods alone, reciting unholy incantations, taking the shortcut across the moors, and so on. Our

patience is stretched to critical levels, but somehow we keep hoping the payoff will make it worth the agony. Every so often, however, a movie comes along that so callously abuses our generosity that we're left with little choice but to call bullshit.

Fall Down Dead stars Dominique Swain as Christie, a single mom trying to make it home on Christmas Eve. In her way is "The Picasso Killer" (the always-amazing Udo Kier), a notorious murderer who earned his nickname by creating portraits of his victims using acrylics and chunks of their skin. Christie catches him

in the act, he catches her catching him, and not only does he need to stop her from telling the authorities, he identifies her as his "masterpiece." She narrowly escapes into a nearby office building, falling under the care of its security guard, a conspicuously wobbly David Carradine (badly, in one of his last roles). Cops arrive, and upon learning that her assailant is The Picasso Killer, they turn ghost-white. Now here comes the bullshit.





OVERLOOKED, FORGOTTEN AND DISMISSED

THIS ISSUE: LANCE GETS CAUGHT IN THE 'NET

THE PRICE IS LIFE



DEATH TUBE

Cinema Epoch

What would you do if you came across a live video-streaming website where you could watch people being killed in bizarre ways? Chances are you'd check it out for a while and then debate with your buddies about whether it was real or not. *Death Tube* is a *Saw*-inspired Japanese splatter spectacular about a website where people become unwitting contestants in a vicious game show where the losers pay with their lives. Unfortunately, most of the games are

rather ludicrous, such as having to solve a Rubik's Cube or finish an obstacle course while being harassed by a guy in a cartoon bear costume. A morality play at best, a lame Japanese game show at worst, *Death Tube* is ultimately a disturbing look at modern voyeurism.

BODY COUNT: 12

LAMEST DEATH: Donut poisoning

REAP WHAT YOU SAW



DEATH TUBE 2

Cinema Epoch

Basically a retread of its predecessor, this outing follows another group of people trapped inside the internet-based game world of *Death Tube*. Though most of the games are just as lame, such as playing musical chairs or spinning a hula-hoop, there are some particularly vicious ones where players have to commit suicide in order to save the lives of their children. As the game progresses, contestants discover that they've been brought together because of the crimes of their pasts, just like in the *Saw* movies. While it's definitely a darker outing than the *Death Tube*, the only original thing in the whole flick is three guys in bear costumes dancing to Michael Jackson's "Thriller" — but I'm not quite sure if that's a good thing or not...

BODY COUNT: 14

LAMEST DEATH: Whacked by a wrecking ball

UNDRESS FOR SUCCESS



CAM GIRL

Chemical Burn

Mary O'Brien is a sexy college student in desperate need of rent money. But instead of handing out resumes, she decides to become a webcam girl — men pay to watch her strip online. Working out of her home, the DFI pornographer discovers that she's being stalked by a deranged killer who's been breaking into her house, videotaping her in the shower and leaving notes and flowers on her bed. Shot almost exclusively on one set with only two actors, *Cam Girl*

is a boring affair that suffers from a rambling narrative and long, tension-killing musical interludes. Usually I wouldn't ples on a film that features a hot naked chick in the first 41 seconds, but in this case I'm willing to make an exception.

BODY COUNT: 1

LAMEST DEATH: Murdered by a priest

The three professional law enforcement agents, who are armed with handguns, are reduced to quivering messes by a 60-something German man with a straight razor. There's no explanation as to why, though. His victims are lone women, and his crimes take place in secluded locales. Nothing indicates freakish strength or supernatural powers. It's all meant to be told by the cops' reaction, and it simply doesn't work. As more characters begin appearing out of the woodwork, the killer becomes outnumbered and outgunned, and yet no one uses this to their advantage. Further, each one finds some excuse to leave the group. You can guess what happens next.

This is not a call for consistently airtight logic in horror films. This is just a case in which a film fails to apply a bare minimum of common sense. The shame is that *Fall Down Dead* is otherwise only a few crucial notches short of being a solid modern giallo.

TAL ZIMERMAN

SLOW BOAT TO NOWHERE

KILLER YACHT PARTY

Starring Maggie Marston, Becky Boxer and Eric Clark

Directed by Paul Wozniak

Written by Alex Silver and April Wright

Trimms

You know those douches who stand in line for hours outside night clubs just so they can pay a cover charge to get in, even though there's no live entertainment inside? Ever wonder what their lives are really like? No, me neither. How there's a horror movie about them. Interested? No, me neither. But I have to write a review of it.

We spend most of the first half of *Killer Yacht Party* getting to know a group of the aforementioned douches through interminable footage of their dreary lives unfolding in a really mundane Hollywood dance club. They hook up, break up and squabble over drug debts, then start over again. The

sole exception to the rule is Jane (Maggie Marston), who is a Good Person, which we know because she's a sensitive aspiring singer/songwriter from Iowa who doesn't dress slutty and never does coke or ecstasy. Just for a change of pace, the d-bags in question (and Jane) take a night off from the club to attend an exclusive party on a yacht, which of course happens to be

(allegedly) haunted, providing for a trailerload of red herrings when people start getting murdered. Sadly, the murders — which are both PG-13 tame and poorly staged — don't even begin until about the 45-minute mark, by which time we've been rendered uncomfortably numb by all the foregoing sub-90210 drama.

Performances by the largely unknown cast are uniformly solid, but don't make this turgid cheapie any more palatable. The experience left me feeling as if I'd stood in line for hours, paid a cover charge and entered a club to find nothing going on. It's enough to make you feel like... well, a bit of a douche, really.

JOHN W. BOWEN



LAST CHANCE LANCE

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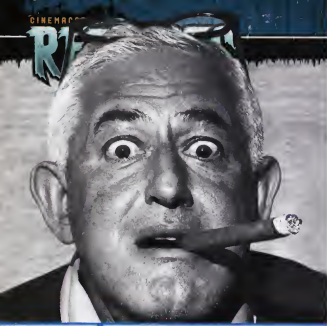
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SALUTE TO A SHOWMAN

SPINE TINGLER! THE WILLIAM CASTLE STORY (2007) ^{HD}

Featuring Terry Castle, Joe Dante and John Waters
Directed by Jeffrey Schwarz
Autumn Pictures

Back in the late 1950s and early '60s, while filmmakers such as Terence Fisher and Roger Corman were successfully crafting sumptuous Gothic chills for Hammer and AIP, producer/director William Castle was busy carving out his own niche with a series of playful, (mainly) black-and-white shockers that, despite hokey effects and modest production values, managed to attract huge audiences. Helping to make these low-budget flicks a success was Castle's inimitable brand of self-promotion and carnival barker showmanship — which often involved releasing the films with off-the-wall gimmicks such as "fission-O," which saw placard glasses handed out to theatregoers that allowed them to "see" apparitions for 13 Ghosts.

The movies, the gimmicks and the man who devised them are all examined in Jeffrey Schwarz's fascinating feature-length documentary *Spine Tingler! The William Castle Story*. An affectionate love letter to the grinding, cigar-chomping showman and his creepy cinematic legacy, Schwarz recounts — with the help of

numerous interview subjects, including Castle's daughter, Terry, and famous fans of his work such as Corman, Joe Dante, John Waters and Forrest J Ackerman — Castle's childhood (as an orphan in New York) before moving on to his Broadway beginnings in the late 1920s, his work as a director of numerous westerns and action flicks in the 1940s, and finally the horror projects for which he is best known.

Interestingly, Castle's daughter opines that her father used his infamous gimmickery because he was insecure and believed his films weren't strong enough to bring in audiences on their own. Despite the financial success of his pictures, Castle always longed to make "legitimate" films and was allegedly disappointed when *Rosemary's Baby* (the rights of which he bought in order to direct it himself) was handed over to Roman Polanski. Ironically, Castle's marketing plays may have even influenced Alfred Hitchcock, who employed a similar campaign when exhibiting *Psycho* (1960).

Previously available as part of Sony's *William Castle Film Collection* box set, *Spine Tingler! (RMA99)* is now available separately and is packed with bonus features, including a making-of featurette, numerous interview outtakes, vintage footage of the 1959 Texas premiere of *The Tingler*, an interesting audio clip of a 1975 lecture that Castle gave at the USC Film School, as well as two

commentaries — one of which features none other than the filmmaker himself (culled from a vintage interview). Incredibly fun and entertaining, *Spine Tingler!* will put a smile on your face. And that's a guarantee, ladies and gentlemen!

JAMES BURRELL

JURASSIC SNARK

THE LAST DINOSAUR (1977) ^{HD}

Starring Richard Boone, Jean Van Ark and Steven Keats
Directed by Alexander Greenleaf and Tsuyunobu Kitano
Written by William Overgard
Warner Bros.

Rubber dino suits, Japanese cavemen, disco ballads and laughable dialogue galore await in this flamboyant and silly TV movie-of-the-week. A Japanese/American co-production from Rankin-Bass that was intended to ride on the *King Kong* remake's short hairs, *The Last Dinosaur* is basically *The Lost World* redux, except the floppy dinosaurs appear to be distant relatives of Godzilla and, instead of a man of science, our Professor Challenger is a boozy, sexist big game hunter fond of calling people "ding dongs."

Surprisingly, the title actually refers to irascible adventure-seeker Masten Thrust Jr. (a bloated, 60-year-old Richard Boone) rather than his prehistoric prey, a point made explicit in the hilarious disco theme song by Nancy Wilson. Embarking on an expedition to bag himself a *Tyrannosaurus rex*, Thrust recruits a small crew, including a mute African guide (Luther Mackley) and, for the requisite age-inappropriate love scene, a plucky female photographer (Jean Van Ark). Using a specially equipped undersea capsule, they drill through the ocean floor with lasers and discover a Jurassic wonderland that's just asking to be shot in the face.

The half-dozen colossal creatures, designed by "The Father of Godzilla" Eiji Tsuburaya's FX company, are decent, if cartoonish, especially compared to some of the lackluster *Kyau* films that Toho was cranking out at the time. Plus, *The Last Dinosaur*'s crowd-pleasing bloody battle between the *Tyrannosaurus* and a *Terroraptor* that breaks out of the wall of a cave is definitely worth suffering through some of the film's lethargic dialogue-heavy scenes.

One suspects there wasn't much budget for creature footage, though, so there's plenty of squabbling over Thrust's intentions, and the creepiest low triangle since *Dorian Gray* sent a sailor packing so he could spend a romantic evening with his own portrait. While the dino-less scenes are amusingly overwrought and entertaining in their own campy way, they're bound to disappoint those only interested in jungle-stomping monster action.

But even as *The Last Dinosaur* regularly tests the audience's patience, there's a Saturday matinee fun to the proceedings that generates a lot of goodwill. Boone's tongue appears to be planted so deep in his cheek that it's amazing that he doesn't pop a hole in it, especially as Thrust's Ahab complex takes over in



the final reel it's cheesy monster melodrama, sure, but that doesn't make it any less delicious

PAUL CORUPE

IN ITALY NO ONE CAN HEAR YOU SCREAM

ALIEN 2: ON EARTH (1980) Black/VD

Starring Delinda Mayne, Mark Bodin and Roberto Sarnese
Written and directed by Dino Ippolito
Midnight Legacy

While this Italian "sequel" to *Alien* has previously been released a couple of times on VHS in order to cash in on the success of Ridley Scott's legendary extraterrestrial horror, *Alien 2: On Earth* (originally subtitled *Sulla Terra*) has never been issued on a digital format until now. The folks at fledgling niche imprint Midnight Legacy decided to make this ultra-obscure spaghetti-splatter outing their inaugural release, touting it as the first-ever widescreen presentation of the film, fully restored from the original 35mm negative and completely uncut.

Nat surprisingly, the only connection it bears to Scott's film is to rip off its ideas. The plot sees a space-craft, which is returning to Earth, scatter a bunch of blue rocks around, one of which ends up in a cave explorer's backpack just before she plunges deep underground with some friends for a weekend of spelunking. But the rocks are actually alien eggs and once they start hatching, they release face-huggers that look like clumps of raw hamburger. Trapped underground, the spelunkers start getting picked off by the aliens, which briefly incubate inside of them before bursting out of their chests and faces, leaving nothing but hoags of gore behind.

Fans of Italian horror may be thrilled to see Michele Soavi (Delamorte Delamorte, *The Church*) and Mark Bodin (Anthropophagus) in the cast, but about halfway through the film you'll understand why it has languished in obscurity for so long. The plot is ridiculous and painfully slow, the acting is beyond atrocious, the gore effects (though plentiful) are goofy and low-budget, and the score is clearly a Goblin rip-off.

Yes, this is a wonderfully presented print, but ultimately *Alien 2* is nothing more than a deliberate attempt at commercial opportunism that relies on ham-fisted splatter effects, along with a couple of topless scenes. Not even the most pristine transfer in the world can forgive that.

Still intrigued? Well, extras on the disc include some alternate and extended takes, a Dutch VHS trailer that



looks as though it's been passed through somebody's colon, and some special effects outtakes that are about as interesting as watching paint dry. In space, no one can hear you snore.

LAST CHANCE LANCE

DRAXPLOITATION

OLD DRACULA (1975) VD

Starring David Niven, Teresa Graves and Peter Bayle
Directed by Clive Donner
Written by Jeremy Lloyd
MGM

One of the most bloodless horror salutes to hit screens, *Old Dracula* mimes on just about every possible level—as comedy, as horror and even as the titillating spot of fun it's apparently intended to be. Filmed as *Vampire* but renamed after the success of *Young Frankenstein*, the new title is almost too accurate—the stale spoof feels behind the times, pining up a past-prime David Niven with a gaggle of *Playboy* playmates for a racial twist on the age-old vampire tale.

In modern-day Transylvania, Dracula (Niven) has turned his home into a tourist trap, content with draining the occasional sightseer's plasma. But when a group of models arrive for the latest nude contest/ad shoot over, he recognizes that one African-American girl (Minah Bird) has a rare blood type that can revive his wife, who has been in a coma since the 1920s. The transfusion succeeds, but also somehow turns Vampire (Teresa Graves) into a

black-skinned vampiress who wants to disco dance, watch blaxploitation movies and bad everyone she sees. Unable to keep up, Ol' Drac heads to swingin' London to locate the girls and reverse the effect.

UK director Clive Donner made his name on 1960s comedies such as *What's New Pussycat?* and *Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush*, and *Old Dracula* isn't much different—it barely acknowledges that a decade has passed since those sexy comedies were popular. Even then, the script by Laugh-In star Jeremy Lloyd is virtually devoid of laughs and purpose, relying instead on punny sexual innuendo and broad characterizations.

Three years after audiences got a taste of a relatively serious African-American vampire in *Dracula*, *Old Dracula's* Vampire is treated as little more than a silly novelty here. There's none of the clever race satire that charged similarly premised films such as *Watermelon Man*—the race switcheroo has only one function in this film, to set up an obvious "twist" ending in which Niven, having failed to turn Vampire back, appears in body made-up blackface. You know, just in case anyone in the audience wasn't vaguely offended yet.

Hammer Films ignominies Linda Hayden and Veronica Carlson keep things interesting for horror fans, and the scenes set in Drac's cheesy dinner theatre castle—complete with fake thunderstorms and wire-gliding plastic bats—provide scattered moments of fun in this otherwise passé exercise that should have been put out to pasture.

PAUL CORUPE



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JUST LIKE MUMMY USED TO MAKE

CURSE OF THE FACELESS MAN (1958) DVD

Starring Richard Anderson, Elaine Edwards
and Adele Mara
Directed by Edward L. Cahn
Written by Jerome Study
MGM

Hammer Films gets most of the credit for reanimating Universal's classic screen monsters in the 1950s, but the truth is they weren't the only ones ransacking 1930s horror franchises for inspiration. Even before Hammer began its lush Gothic adaptations of *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*, poverty row studios such as Gramercy, AIP and Clover were busy cranking out cheap black and white pictures that modernized these monsters for the atomic age. *Curse of the Faceless Man*, like similar features *The Werewolf* (1956), *The Return of Dracula* (1958) and the *Black Lagoon*-spawned *The Monster of Piedras Blancas* (1959), isn't always successful at transplanting its titular creature to post-World War II America, but there's some scattered fun to be had.

Borrowing heavily from *The Mummy*, *Curse of the Faceless Man* has another ancient, uncannily preserved man who has somehow come to life to reunite with his long-lost love, striking down anyone who gets in his way. But, in a ripped-

from-the-headlines twist, this film draws on then-recent Spanish archeological excavations. When Mount Vesuvius erupted in 79 AD, burning ash descended on the city of Pompeii, instantaneously hardening to freeze an exact moment of time. Though historians first began uncovering Pompeii's treasures in the 18th century, major discoveries were still being made in the 1950s as whole villas were finally uncovered.

The film, which occupied the bottom of a double bill with director Edward L. Cahn's superior sci-fi shocker *NI The Terror from Beyond Space* (1958), plays out largely as expected. While visiting Naples, American doctor Paul Mallon (Richard Anderson) is having a hard time believing that a recent archeological find, the fully rock-encrusted body of a 2000-year-old Roman warrior (Bob Bryant), is walking around crushing people's skulls. Meanwhile, his fiancée Tina (Elaine Edwards) is having strange nightmares about the

stone figure, with whom she apparently shares some kind of psychic connection. Is it possible that Tina's the reincarnation of the faceless man's girlfriend? Do you even have to ask?

Running a brisk 66 minutes, *Curse of the Faceless Man* still drags its feet in several vital areas. The monster itself is not terribly scary — while there are superficial similarities to the oversized, avenging statue in *The Golem* (1920), the (literally) stone-faced creature is more mysterious than menacing. But even more problematic are the scenes in which the monster isn't in the background ready to smash down balsa wood doors. When the narrative isn't caught up in the tedious love triangle between Paul, Tina and a local girl (Adele Mara), the film keeps returning to scenes of museum officials, police inspectors and university types standing around trying to come up with a plausible explanation for the figure's return to life. Eventually, they hit on some convoluted tale involving X-rays, an ancient curse, vats of embalming fluid and underground radiation — a waste of time, considering the audience cared little about anything other than shots of the creature terrorizing poor Tina.

And there are still plenty of those, that scene in *The Mummy* where Boris Karloff slowly awakes from his sarcophagus and kills the archeologist is re-enacted no less than three times, and the climax utilizes that old creature feature standby: the monster carrying the uncon-

sconscious girl off into the distance. By this point, however, *Curse of the Faceless Man* has given up all hope and seems instead to ape the budget-minded sequel, *The Mummy's Ghost* (1944). It even concludes with virtually the same ending, as the Faceless Man dissolves in water after walking into the sea — Khans would have been proud!

Thankfully, Hammer was already helping the classic monsters regain their respectability by this time. And — judging by this entry, now available as part of



MGM's manufacture-on-demand program — not a moment too soon. Poppered with stock footage, ludicrous science and painfully phony European set dressing, *Curse of the Faceless Man* is just as bland and featureless as its title suggests.

PAUL CORUPE





IT CAME FROM BOWEN'S BASEMENT



DRIVE-INS, DELETE BINS AND OTHER SINS

SNAKEMEN TELL NO TALES

by John W. Bowen

Here is wisdom: whether he shows up in dramas, comedies, action thrillers or even the odd horror film, Strother Martin is not to be trusted.

He may not have spent his entire 30-plus-year career playing villains, but he remains best known as that guy whose kindly countenance thinly disguises anything from moral turpitude to pure evil. His career-defining role was the sadistic Captain in *Cool Hand Luke* ("What we have here is failure to communicate"), but he also famously scuzzed it up as the sleazy manager of a minor-league hockey team in *Slip Shot* and as a small-town doctor who secretly leads a coven of devil worshippers in *The Brotherhood of Satan*. Just prior to his death in 1980, he was to play bad guy Oth P. Hazzelrig in *Dark Night of the Scarecrow* and was subsequently replaced by Charles Durning. So when he shows up as a friendly, misunderstood herpetologist in a movie about poisonous snakes, should alarms start sounding? Damn skippy, they should.

Although I make a point of watching the classic (and still under-appreciated) *Slip Shot* at least once a year, my most recent reintroduction to Martin came via a sweet score I made during Blockbuster's recent chain-wide liquidation sale: a two-disc set from Universal that includes *The Serpent and the Rainbow* (which I like), *The Funhouse* (which I really like) and *Phantom II* (which I love more than life itself). But it was the fourth film in the set that intrigued me the most, even though it's far from the best one: the endearingly titled 1973 novelty *Sssssss*, which enjoyed a modestly successful theatrical run and then played regularly on TV for about a decade before falling off the map.

A pre-*Batman* *Galactus*, pre-*Love Boat*, pre-*A Team*, pre-much-of-everything-at-all Dirk Benedict plays David Blake, a university student who takes a



summer job as a lab assistant for Dr. Carl Stoner (Martin), a charming, slightly eccentric, snake-fancying biologist who's been largely ostracized by his academic peers. He adores animals and has a docile, alcoholic python (don't ask) named Harry for a house pet — how could this guy possibly be dodgy? (Clue: he's Strother fucking Martin.)

David and the doc hit it off famously, and David soon falls head-over-keds in love with his employer's daughter (Heather Menzies of *Piranha* and that gridhouse cult fave *The Sound of Music*). At this point, even the most casual horror fan knows this can only go one of two ways: either our hero bonds with his future pe-in-law as they fight the forces of evil, or the doctor turns out to be mad, which

means tough decisions must be made and labs must be blown up. Given who's playing the scientist here, things are likely gonna go south, and sure enough, Stoner has ulterior motives. That antivenom serum he's been injecting David with, ostensibly to build up an immunity to snake bites, isn't really an antidote at all; it's a secret formula that's slowly turning David into... wait for it... a SNAKEMAN! Why? Who cares! Through some cheesy-looking yet ingenious makeup effects, we watch David slowly turning green, shed-

ding his skin and generally becoming more reptilian than most politicians or even strip club managers. Of course, things got even worse for our boy when Stoner learns that his lab assistant and daughter have been getting biz-zay out at the local skunk-dipping pond. (Which, time out here, you've been surreptitiously turning this guy into a SNAKEMAN without his consent, and now you're getting all morally outraged because he's boring your daughter? Dude, make like a python and get a grip.)

With most people it all comes down to one of the big three animal phobias: snakes, spiders and rats, and I'm spiders all the way. I generally don't have a problem with snakes; I've held (and even snuggled with) more than one box constrictor, and while I'm inclined to give poisonous snakes a wide berth for common sense reasons, they don't creep me out on a visceral level, with one exception: cobras. Not just because they're incredibly poisonous and extremely aggressive, but mainly because their hiss is much lower-pitched than most other species and sounds almost like human breathing. Something about that makes me want to jump out of my skin, which is probably the reason why *Sssssss* — boasting a shitload of real, live snakes along with its silliness, wonky effects and plot holes — still resonates with me after all these years. Now get the hell out of my basement and remember never turn your back on Sssssbrother Martin.



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BLOOD IN FOUR COLOURS

by PEDRO CABEZUELO

DC Comics recently announced that in September it will relaunch its comic line with a slew of new and rebooted titles in an attempt to revitalize the company. Naturally, the announcement caused some concern among fans, especially followers of John Rozum's excellent *Xombi*, which is conspicuously absent from the fall schedule. The comic, launched in March 2011, has garnered a tremendous amount of critical praise and accrued a rabid fan base during its short shelf life.

Xombi's story began back in 1994 when it debuted as part of DC's Milestone imprint, a line of comics showcasing ethnic super-heroes. The series' lead character, David Kim, is a Korean-American scientist who becomes technologically enhanced after being injected with a nanotech virus. The nanites inside his bloodstream give him the power to restructure matter — including his own body, making him virtually immortal — by consuming other matter (which could potentially include other people). The original *Xombi* lasted a mere 22 issues and was well-known for its supernatural storylines and bizarre cast of characters.

When the new *Xombi* debuted earlier this year, readers were smacked with an outrageous story featuring a secret prison guarded by the Catholic Church (where inmates are shrunk and placed inside miniature houses), super-powered nuns, a college student transformed into Mr. Hyde after reading a copy of *Dr. Jekyll* that's "riddled with semi-colon cancer," killer snow angels and evil Halloween spirits. And that's just the first issue!

Although Rozum doesn't describe *Xombi* as a straight-up horror title, there's no denying that he's a genuine, dyed-in-the-wool horror fan.

"Horror is in my blood," he states. "I came to the genre through my childhood love of dinosaurs, which led to my parents letting me watch *Godzilla* and *King Kong* on television. I have a drawing I made when I was in kindergarten that's meant

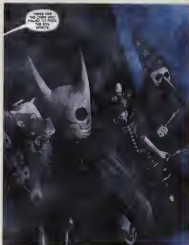
to be a family portrait. It contains myself, a green Frankenstein monster, a mad woman, a flying vampire person with a hat, a bat and a ghost. I used to watch *The Monsters* and think that somehow Marilyn and I had been accidentally placed in each other's correct families."

The writer's love of monsters and the grotesque is readily evident in his work on *Xombi*, where there's a veritable museum of the macabre on display.

"These aren't comfortably familiar monsters like zombies and vampires," Rozum explains, "these are all new creations that hopefully are a bit unsettling in their alienness and unfamiliarity, like the snow angels and rustling husks from the first couple of issues and the dental phantoms and the sisterhood of blood mummies that appear in issue six. A lot of the fun for me is coming up with all of the monsters that no one has ever seen before."

Fraser Irving's art on the series has drawn as much praise as the writing, perfectly capturing the nightmarish sense of the story with its clever use of colour and the near-grotesque expressionism of its characters.

"Irving approaches everything from the characters outward and spent a lot of time asking me about them and their relationships with each other so that he could create individual performances for them," says Rozum. "He's so successful in conveying the characters, their reactions and their inner thoughts in his art that I had to write less and less of this important material in the form of dialogue and descriptive captions."



Fraser Irving's surreal art is the perfect match for John Rozum's weird tales.



Although the future of the book remains shamefully in doubt, Rozum admits he has a master plan for the life of David Kim, which will hopefully see the light of day one way or another. The stories in *Xombi* are intended to take the character "from A to B" in each installment, allowing David to evolve throughout the larger story arc. Rozum already has a plotline in place for the series' next progression, which will see a major, harrowing change.

"Things turn very dark, very quickly and only get worse for quite some time," he says. "David's determination to maintain a foothold in the everyday world that his friends still occupy is going to bring some really dire consequences to the people he holds dearest and this will also have a huge impact on him and the series as a whole."

Attention readers! Run to your nearest comic store and pick up *Xombi* if you haven't already, and then let DC know you want the series to continue. Follow johnrozum.blogspot.com for updates.

Mystery Men has proven to be a pleasant surprise, not only because of its high quality, but also because of its unexpected horror content. Set in New York City in 1932, it's the story of (to date) three heroes — cat burglar vigilante The Operative, warth-like Revenant and aviator Sarah Starr — who get thrown together while investigating the grisly murder of Sarah's sister (and The Operative's girlfriend), Alice. What they don't know is that Alice was the victim of a ritualistic sacrifice at the hands of the emaciated and enigmatic General, so he could gain power from a demonic fear lord named Nex. After the fantastic first issue, this installment slows the pace down somewhat to fill in a few more details and allow us to get to know the players a bit better. But that's not a complaint, as *Mystery Men* continues to perfectly play up the pulp angle while seamlessly moving in some horror. Highly recommended.



DC is obviously filling up space until Scott Snyder's ongoing *Swamp Thing* series debuts in September, so for now we get *Brightest Day Aftermath: The Search for Swamp Thing*, a lame mini-opus that has John Constantine digging to the bottom of Swampy's return. Along the way he runs into Batman, ex-

fume Zatanna and an incredible amount of expository dialogue. Adding insult to injury, Constantine's lines are filled with so many uncharacteristically clichéd British idioms that I kept expecting him to break into a rendition of "Wouldn't It Be Lovely?" Not helping matters is Marco Castibello's art, which is very nondescript and just... wrong. Proportions are way out of whack, as is the narrative flow, which is choppy and difficult to follow, resulting in a comic that is just plain ugly.

I haven't been keeping up with Marvel's *Fear Itself* saga, but the basic thrust appears to be a wave of panic spreading out across the entire Marvel Universe. Those of you familiar with *Min-Thing* (see Classic Cut, p. 70) will remember that his touch is deadly to anyone who shows even the slightest fear. Needless to say, current events have led the creature to run amok, accidentally killing a number of innocents. So in *Fear Itself: Fearsome Four* it's up to Howard the Duck, She-Hulk, Nighthawk and Frankenstein to stop his rampage (cause everyone else is busy, apparently). The story is a bit slow and spends too much time introducing the characters, though the premise is



wonderfully bizarre, so hopefully future installments will capitalize on this. Michael Wm. Kaluta's art is always welcome and Simon Bisley's distinctive style makes a rather jarring and dramatic entrance as *Min-Thing* manipulates the Nexus of all realities, causing everyone to warp into grotesque caricatures. Not as much fun as it's trying to be, but it's getting there.

As a young boy during the Depression, Martin used to listen to stories from his father, a railroad man, while watching the trains go by. He was especially fascinated by tales of the Hellbound Train, a menacing locomotive that would ferry its unknown cargo every night at midnight. The tragic death of his father leads Martin to a life filled with orphanages, vagrancy, petty theft and odd jobs, until the fateful night he catches up to the Hellbound Train and makes a deal with its menacing conductor. That Hellbound Train is an adaptation of a 1958 short story by Robert Bloch that has rather mixed results. The issue is jarring, darting around Martin's childhood and adolescence without getting a firm grasp on the character, which makes his eventual deal with the Conductor somewhat puzzling. However, Dave Weichert's art more than makes up for the narrative shortcomings. There's a strong *Wrightson* vibe to his work and his panels are thick with a sombre, melancholy mood.

The Goon makes his triumphant return to the world of bi-monthly comics in order to expose the true evil behind the



whole sparkly vampire craze. Btw: girls. A seemingly innocent young lass is dropped off at the McGregg Home and promptly transforms into a multi-tentacled demon that terrorizes the other children (that gang of trouble-makers, the Little, Unholy Bastards). They soon enlist The Goon's help — once they get him drunk, of course. There's really little more to say about Eric Powell's *The Goon* #34. Like Mignola and Hellboy, you know what you're going to get, and if you've liked it so far, it won't disappoint. It's violent, pulls no punches, is sometimes crude, always funny and boasts fantastic art. "Nuff said."



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NOTHING BUT NET DESPERATELY SEEKING GOATSUCKERS ANGUISH FOR AUDIOPHILES

ALLIED ARTISTS HORROR, SCIENCE
FICTION AND FANTASY FILMSMichael R. Pitts
McFarland

Once upon a time, genre film books with plot synopses, detailed cast lists and "rare" photographs were a godsend for horror geeks. Fervent fans could spend hours drinking in the details of films they had not seen — and weren't likely to see unless they stumbled upon some late-night TV airing. But the internet has changed all that, if you want to know all about an obscure 1960s vampire film, just browse countless online reviews and then order it on-demand. So why do some horror historians still insist on writing books as if the internet never happened?

This is certainly the case with *Allied Artists Horror, Science Fiction and Fantasy Films*, which covers the more than 80 feature films released by poverty row mainstay Allied Artists from the 1950s right through until the late '70s. With three or four pages dedicated to each film, the book generally serves up only a detailed plot outline, a few stills and perhaps a sentence or two of broad context. True, some of the films that author Michael Pitts covers are not readily available, such as *The Maze and Blood* and *Black Lace*, but with scant new information included on heavily covered movies such as *The Little Shop of Horrors* and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, Pitts makes a weak case against just heading to the IMDB.

The idea to group these films in one book is also kind of odd, as Allied Artists did more distribution than in-house productions. Unlike, for example, AIP, they had no real identifiable "house style," just a selection of work they bought the rights to, including films from Japan, Russia and Spain, as well as from various indie producers such as Roger Corman and Jack Hams.

Yes, once upon a time, the "facts" about a plot or the name of the cinematographer on some sci-fi obscurity could almost be the sole domain of the person who sought that movie out. But the internet's democratization of information has made this irrelevant. Now it's up to authors to give their own unique interpretation of readily available facts, which Pitts certainly hasn't done here.

PAUL CORUPE

TRACKING THE CHUPACABRA

Benjamin Radford
University of New Mexico Press

Despite being a relative newcomer among cryptozoo creatures, the chupacabra has become one of the most popular, owing its fame to sensational news coverage and cable television. While legends of sea serpents and hairy wildmen go back centuries, the chupacabra's story began a mere sixteen years ago in Puerto Rico, where the creature was suspected of sucking the blood from goats. Since that time, there have been a few non-fiction books dedicated to this vampiric beastie, but none as thorough, objective and well-written as Benjamin Radford's *Tracking the Chupacabra*.

Radford is the managing editor of *Skeptical Inquirer* magazine and a frequent token skeptic on television shows such as *MonsterQuest* and *Is It Real?* As such, you can probably guess that *El Chupacabra* isn't getting any easy breaks here; however, don't let that discourage you from joining the fun. Radford shows a genuine fascination for the creature and maintains respect for the legend as he sorts through the facts. Along the way, he examines the mystery from various angles, including folklore, media-fueled terror and mistaken identity. He also considers the possibility of the chupacabra being a real

species whose carcasses have turned up in several countries and states. The book deals with often-contrasting descriptions and casts a skeptical eye upon the dubious body of evidence gathered thus far, using just enough science to be effective without being overly heavy. Radford goes on to highlight his own expeditions in search of the creature, underscoring his authority on the subject.

Tracking the Chupacabra also takes some entertaining side roads into the chupacabra's pop-culture legacy, and briefly examines the history of vampires as it relates to the cultural record of blood-guzzling creatures. As well, the book debates the alleged link between a certain 1995 sci-fi film and the first sighting of the creature that same year. (I won't give it away in case you're unfamiliar.)

Radford's common sense analysis reads well, stays on target and is not shy about exposing any suspected tomfoolery. And whether we end up agreeing with his conclusions or not, *Tracking the Chupacabra* is still a completely worthwhile exploration into the phenomenon of this modern-day monster.

LYLE BLACKBURN

ROCK 'N' ROLL IS DEAD:
DARK TALES INSPIRED BY MUSICMarc Ciochon, ed.
Blood Bound Books

In true rock fashion, a front-to-back reading of this 24-tale short fiction anthology is similar to the state you'd be in after drinking the same number of beers (surely it's no coincidence that the number of stories is equal to a full case of wobbly pop?). Glassy-eyed, euphoric, uninhibited, scared and — depending on your constitution — either ready for bed or ready for more.

THE GRIM READER

CRAZY 4 CULT: CULT MOVIE ART

Gallery 1988

Titan

For five years, Los Angeles' Gallery 1988 has hosted an annual "Crazy 4 Cult" art show where renowned artists, such as Shepard Fairey and Jason D'Aquino, peddle their pop culture-inspired works. Now, Titan Books has assembled some of the exhibit's best art into a hardcover volume, featuring more than 150 artists. While the broad focus is on cult cinema, *They Live*, *Dawn of the Dead*, *The Evil Dead*, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *The Shining*, *Friday the 13th* and *The Exorcist* are all celebrated within, making this an ideal coffee-table conversation piece.

JENNIFER M. WOOD



BLACK SABBATH FAQ

Marlin Popoff
Backlist Books

As obsessive as Black Sabbath is heavy, this unorthodox grab bag of Sabbath insider interviews, timelines, analyses and rare photos from acclaimed metalhead journalist Marlin Popoff exhaustively traces the origin and continuing influence of the band's legendary doom. Casual fans looking for a straight biography should opt for Popoff's previous book on the Sabs, *Black Sabbath: Doom Let Loose*, but for minuscule-lovin' dielards, this is essential.

TREVOR TUMINSKI

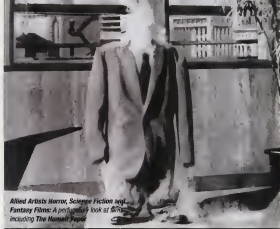


DIABOLICAL

Hank Schwaebler
Jove

In this second installment of Hank Schwaebler's ongoing supernatural crime series, detective Jake Hatcher is forced to stop a twisted plot to open a portal to hell. What's worse, the hellion in charge is his own brother. Be sure to read *Damnable* (RME92) first or else the intricate plot and minimal back story will likely leave your head swimming. Intensely enjoyable, but admittedly bleak, this novel is perfect for crime-horror fans.

JESSA SOBCHUK



Allied Artists Horror, Science Fiction and Fantasy Films: A perfect look at films including *The Human Factor*.

After a touching dedication to late metal icon Ronnie James Dio, *Crazy 'n' Roll's Dead* rolls out a set list of dark shorts inspired by music, which fall into the two well-known musical categories of either killer or filler. Early numbers such as Jenna M. Pitman's gripping underwater love story "The Language of Bones" (inspired by The Killers' "Bones"), the bewitching misdirection of Quentin Pittman's "Saving Grace" (Screamers' Jay Hawkins' "I Put a Spell On You") and Ben A. Bell's hell-on-wheels trucker yam "Just Another Town" (The Grateful Dead's "Friend of the Devil") are guaranteed to get your gooseflesh dancing. However, the corpse harvesting of Bryan Olfendick's "Snatch" (Against Me's "How Low") — a storyline highly reminiscent of the 1990 film *The Ambulance* — and the phantom soldiers of David Rentrow's "Messages" (Disturbed's "Ten Thousand Fists") are not only unflinching, they also arouse suspicion as to whether they simply had a song title tacked on to fit the anthology's theme.

Like a great tune, though, the collection builds to a crescendo of its most memorable hooks: Chris Samson's wrestling match-cum-unearthly death match in "The Rule Breakers" (Ramones' "The Crusher"), Morgan Dambarger's "Unleathered" (Cobra Starship's "Good Girls Go Bad"), in which some girls go really wild, the cursed drum kit of Nate D. Burleigh's "Trap Set" (The Surfaris' "Wipe Out"); and the most musical entry, Nathan Crowder's "The Invitation" (David Bowie's "Rock 'n' Roll Suicide"), which finally reveals the truth about the test stop for deceased musical legends, that great egg in the sky.

While not every cut is destined for the hall of fame, editor Marc Ciccone has assembled an entertaining set of shorts in a range of styles as diverse as their musical counterparts. And with the longest entry clocking in at just thirteen pages, if one story doesn't rock you, take Bob Seger's advice and simply "turn the page."

TREVOR TUMINSKI

THE CONCRETE GROVE

Gary McMahon
Spirals

British author Gary McMahon, the scribe behind *Pretty Little Dead Things* and *Hungry Hearts*, has a way of making even hummingbirds seem menacing in his imaginative, genre-bending novel *The Concrete Grove*. Elements of urban fantasy, body horror and Lovecraftian psychological terror mix



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CHAOS, CARNAGE AND KILLERS

BY MONICA S. KUEBLER



HORROR FICTION IS THE LITERARY EQUIVALENT OF PUNK ROCK. And no one makes a better case for this than John Shirley, a punk rocker-cum-groundbreaking genre writer who has spent the last few decades trying to, as he describes, encapsulate "the power of a loud, intelligent, but crazedly energetic rock concert" in book form. An apt pursuit, as much of Shirley's work is inspired by the weird and wicked things he witnessed during his outsider years spent playing in bands such as Sado-Nation, Obsession and The Panther Moderns.

He speaks of writing a letter to the late sci-fi/fantasy author Avram Davidson once, during that era, describing how he'd been swept up in a Manhattan police raid and locked in a cell with a bunch of junkie transsexual prostitutes.

"I described to Avram their getting more and more shrill, more aggressive, as the night and their withdrawal wore on, and how one of them said she kept a razor under her tongue and used it on some trick who'd pissed her off. And Avram wrote back and said, 'Why the hell are you telling me this when you should be putting it into your writing?' And I did, with that incident and others."

Influenced by literary rebels such as Poe, Lovecraft, William Burroughs, Kurt Vonnegut, Harlan Ellison and even Charles Baudelaire, Shirley's work is raw, pounding and vital. His new collection, *In Extremis* (out this month from Underland Press), mines a career's worth of wildly imaginative, and just plain wild, horror tales.

The 326-page book revels in life on society's fringes, and the desperate drags, demented junkies, sadists and sexually insatiable deviants you might meet there. There's occasional interference from supernatural entities, such as the mysterious shadow beings who trick people into committing suicide in "Cul-De-Sac," but mostly the humans are the monsters. (Shirley stokes for them in the book's foreword, at- testing, "They are, in fact, human beings blindly trying to tumble their way out of their own special mazes.")

This is certainly true for the character of Perlick in "Just Like Suzie," who has a dead girl clamped onto his dick after a drug-fueled sexual encounter goes bad, the newly deceased Cordell in "Paper Angels on Fire," whose eternal

fate is to have his hope crushed repeatedly while being endlessly consumed by the mouths of hell; and the desperate woman in "Call Girl, Echoed," who crudely amputates her sex organs with a folding jackknife because men only want to fuck robots nowadays. But the most affecting entry is "Faces in Walls," about a lonely, mute paraplegic, who's routinely abused by the staff at the care facility in which he's been bed-bound for the last six years. It's equal parts soul-shredding and terrifying—offering up an unimaginable degree of helplessness.

"It's more of a concept collection," Shirley explains. "It's an attempt to create an experience that has a certain taste, that offers hope of breaking through the veil of sleep; it tries to wake the reader up in new ways. It uses some humour, absurdity—some of it is definitely absurdist—but much of it is dead serious."

Perhaps what really makes Shirley's work so hard-hitting, though, is his knack for description that practically places the reader within the hostile, seeping environs (crushed between revaged, dying bodies in a wrecked commuter train, for instance); the occasional seamless blending of science fiction with stark horror (a man practices sustainable taekwondo to exhibit living celebrities); and a dogged slowness to the language and flow of the stories, to the point of willingly breaking convention and even the rules of grammar ("Answering Machine" tells a tale of murder entirely through a stilted telephone message).

And, just like a fearless musician, Shirley's not afraid to change the arrangement. Several stories in *In Extremis* received minor edits and updates, as he feels his talent is much more honed now. Many writers consider

this a faux pas, that the work is sacred, but not Shirley. (His unapologetic cross-genre rule-breaking has served him well, most notably in the case of his dystopian future-themed *A Song Called Youth* trilogy, which proved key to the evolution of cyberpunk fiction in the '80s and even inspired sci-fi heavyweight William Gibson.)

"I think that's just being a real writer," he says. "A real writer is always trying to make the writing punch, more potent, clearer, more communicative... I don't change the story though, I just try to bring it more powerfully into focus." ☞



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THE SECRET LIFE OF CONVENTIONS

I love genre lit conventions because the folks in attendance are my tribe, and what could be better than spending a weekend with several hundred like-minded book buffs? This is one of many reasons I am excited about KillerCon 3, a relatively new four-day celebration of horror, sci-fi, thrillers and other forms of paranormal fiction, taking place in Las Vegas from September 22–25. For the sake of full disclosure, I'll admit I'm a guest at this year's event, but that's neither here nor there, because everything I'm about to tell you is equally true, whether you're a fan, creator or guest.

For example, ever wonder just how much business takes place while you're attending panels and workshops and browsing through the dealer's room for rare handovers? Tons.

"It has long been said that most business gets done around the bar at your average convention," says horror author/KillerCon co-organizer Wrath James White. "Pitch sessions have worked for some authors, but at most conventions the big deals are made around the dinner table or on the barstool."

I can back that up: several of the stories I've curated for my own small press, *Burning Effigy*, were born of furtive conversations had at cons. Why? Because conventions are a communal love-in for dark fiction, regardless of whether you're a professional author or not.

"There are lots of opportunities to pick the brains of more established writers," confirms White, who notes this is particularly true of smaller shows. "You have unprecedented access to not just the writers but editors, agents and publishers, as well. We also make sure to have lots of panels geared toward the business and craft of writing to help new and established authors alike to improve their skills and learn the ins and outs of this wacky business we're in."

Yes, a cheap education is yet another perk. Want to find out how to pitch a publisher or hone your craft? Then attend a panel. Need help making your murder scenes more authentic? Fear not, KillerCon will have an actual forensic pathologist on hand to teach a blood spatter workshop about just what happens to the human body when it's slashed, gashed and bashed.

If it sounds like I'm trumpeting this show, I am. We on the East Coast have long been blessed with brilliant writer-focused events such as Necon (Northeastern Writer's Conference), but West Coasters have had to wait until traveling shows such as World Horror land in a state close to them. No more, which is cause for celebration.

So, should you end up in Vegas in September, be sure to shake hands with special guests Mick Garris, Jonathan Maberry, Lucky McKee and Ray Garton, but do dive into the programming, because the best thing you can walk away with is not an autograph, it's inspiration.

MONICA S. KUEHLER

within its pages to create an effectively innovative blend of supernatural fiction that is disturbing, disgusting and, sometimes, surprisingly beautiful.

Hailey, who lives with her mother Lana in an urban housing project known as Concrete Grove, begins suffering from blackouts and unexplained physical abnormalities (namely, she becomes pregnant with a flock of hummingbirds) after exploring an abandoned building in the complex called The Needle. Her mother, in the meantime, owes money to the mob and is facing the consequences of her own sordid past. With her daughter becoming increasingly ill and unstable due to the strange incubation inside her, Lana has no one to turn to but Tom, a married man that helped Hailey after one of her blackout spells, who is grappling with his own domestic nightmares.

While *The Concrete Grove's* plot is far from straightforward, it becomes further complicated by the fact that the characters slip in and out of hallucinogenic dream sequences, which are induced by the dark forces that reside in the Grove. Tom becomes tortured by his own internal fear and guilt surrounding his failing marriage, and soon his nightmares begin to creep into his waking reality. The same forces also seem to be talking to Tom's wife, telling her about his secret liaisons with Lana, while Hailey, who continues to carry the mysterious flock, slips into her own terrifying head trip.

As you've probably already guessed, if you don't enjoy heady, abstract reads, you might have trouble maintaining interest in this novel, even though McMahon maintains a good pace and amps up the tension with plenty of gore and menace. He also has a way of mixing grotesque imagery (decrepit homes, taboo situations and undignified characters) with poetic, ethereal prose that feels completely unique, making *The Concrete Grove* a compelling destination for discerning bibliophiles who prefer their genre fiction both weird and challenging.

JESSA SOBZUK

THE LEAPING

Tom Fletcher
Queerous

Reading Tom Fletcher's debut novel *The Leaping* is almost like trying to decipher a quilted tapestry, there are many pieces and only some of them match. On their own, the pieces are beautiful and rich, but when spun together, things begin to get a little messy.

The narrative alternates between roommates Francis and Jack. They are both in love with the same girl, Jennifer, who eventually buys a house on Fell Hill, which is part of a remote mountain range. The area also happens to be a hot spot for werewolf activity (including orgies!) and seems to mystically attract wannabe shape-shifters, including Jennifer herself. And since Francis and Jack are so damned smitten with her, they blindly follow along. Unfortunately, a lot of the novel doesn't deal with the wolves at all, as the author chooses to focus on Francis' father's battle with cancer, Jack and Jennifer's budding relationship and the pair's former roommates, who like to drink, play *Mario Kart* and make fun of each other.

While Fletcher's writing is imaginative and thoughtful, there's a distinct feeling he's giving priority to ideological messages (in this case, freedom and independence versus responsibility) over structure and plot progression, resulting in the book's disjointed rhythm and disconnected story arc. Furthermore, the first 150 pages could easily be looped off, as nothing happens that adds to the story in a meaningful way. The pages are used to set up the daily lives of the main characters, while name-dropping the dozens of albums, movies and books that they spend their time on. Even the prologue seems irrelevant as it deals with the secondary plotline of a minor character and sets up imagery (i.e. a red sandstorm) that is never mentioned again.

It would be smart to keep Fletcher on your radar, however, because these are all problems that could've been solved with the help of a more attentive editor. Ultimately, this book suffers from over-ambition, not lack of skill. If *The Leaping* was streamlined into a novella, it could be a deadly modern interpretation of the werewolf mythos, but as it stands, there is a lot to wade through before you get to the tasty innards.

JESSA SOBZUK



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TRAVELOQUE OF TERROR

ROSE HALL GREAT HOUSE — MONTEGO BAY, JAMAICA

BY SABA IREB



Perched on a hill, a few miles from Montego Bay, Jamaica, the Rose Hall Great House is a short distance from the seashore. Surrounded by gardens, ponds and a well-kept golf course, the Georgian-style mansion is a tranquil place, with an extraordinary view of the water. A few cats laze around the grounds, watching visitors come and go. Today it might seem peaceful, but at one point the structure was in ruins — crumbling and decaying for approximately 130 years, left to rot, and harbouring a particularly sinister past.

The drive up the slope to the majestic house is a short one. Nobles, servants, slaves and celebrities such as Johnny Cash have all walked in and out of Rose Hall since the structure was built in the 1700s. Cash spent so much time here that he even donated a grandfather clock. But the most notorious person to ever occupy these grounds was undoubtedly Annie Palmer, allegedly a notorious widow who's become known as the White Witch of Rose Hall. While the entire Rose Hall brand is promoted internationally as a huge resort property that includes hotels, spas, golf courses (there's even one called White Witch) and country clubs, the great house is still known in the area mainly as a haunted attraction.

Beyond the ticket entrance is the stately residence itself, with limestone stairs that lead to the house's actual entryway. Originally commissioned by planter George Ash in 1750 and named after his wife Rose, the three-floor calendar house incurred significant damage during slave uprisings of the 1830s. Only the foundation

remains in the East Wing now; the boards were never restored because the wood was far too fragile. Still, though the wing's original rooms for guests, music and billiards might be gone, Rose Hall has retained its 18th- and 19th-century opulence. After a multi-million dollar restoration in the 1960s, the structure stands among the 46 remaining great houses in Jamaica, serving as a reminder of the country's plantation past, of which a few wealthy planters and thousands of slaves tolled in the sugar cane fields.

Rose Hall isn't an exhibition per se, but the whole house is a museum. After purchasing a ticket, you meet up with a tour guide who leads you through Annie's Pub — where you can stop for a quick Witch's Brew, a concoction of rum and fruit juice — on your way to the dungeon. Modern restrooms on either end of the dim chamber distract from the general eerie feeling of the dungeon that once imprisoned the plantation's disobedient slaves, but an assortment of letters in a display case provide some spooky stories about previous visitors' ghostly encounters. Many of the messages include photos of Annie sightings, mostly in the authentic Chippendale mirror that hangs in the upstairs sitting room. Other guests are certain they've seen a man's head on one of the beds.

Once you're led through the rest of the house, the bright, open, airy rooms and grand staircases are a surprising answer to the dim dungeon. As you make your way across the expansive ballroom's creaky floorboards, underneath the original French gold chandelier,

the tour guide recites the tale of Rose Hall's origins. After the first owner George Ash died, his widow Rose remarried at least two more times. Her last husband John Palmer worked to complete Rose Hall between 1770 and 1780, ending up with a great house that soared above a 6600-acre plantation with 2000 slaves. Upon their deaths, the home was passed on to Rose's nephew, John Rose Palmer. In 1820, John married the young Annie Mae Patterson. Born in 1802, Annie became the last mistress of the house, and a legendary feared figure in Jamaican lore. She moved to Haiti when she was just ten years old. After her parents contracted yellow fever and died, she was adopted by a voodoo priestess, who is said to have schooled her in the secrets of black magic.

Her first husband was poisoned in the Gentleman's Room. She ordered her slaves to dump the body by the seashore, and then the returning slaves themselves were killed. The 4'11" woman was rumoured to have stabbed husband number two in the Toilet Room where, between 1905 and 1965, recurring blood stains were said to have been found on the walls. Another husband was killed in the Crawl Room with the help of one of her numerous lovers, Takoo, a freed slave. She blamed his death on yellow fever — a disease so common that nobody was likely to be suspicious. According to legend, in 1831, Takoo eventually killed Annie in her bedroom, and her slaves buried all of her belongings. As a result, no portrait of her remains. There is, however, a picture in the Reception Hall of a lady in red surrounded by children that some believe could have been Annie — though she never had children. Some say that the head and eyes of the lady follow you as you walk by. Of all the rooms in Rose Hall, it is the guest room that is the safest, the guide assures, as nobody was killed there.

Another scary tale comes nearly 100 years after Annie's death, in 1905, when the British government sold the house to the Henderson family. Soon after they moved in, their maid fell to her death from a balcony. Convinced that Annie's ghost had actually pushed her



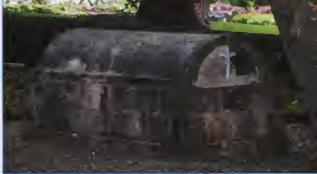
off, they hightailed it to Kingston. From there, the family donated many of the house's authentic pieces toward its restoration. There is now a replica of the upper balcony from which Annie entertained herself, watching her slaves receive cruel punishments. The guide may tell you that the balcony is "quite safe to stand on." Whether this is a wry remark or actual reassurance is tough to say.

After being guided through the rooms where Annie and her husbands were murdered, you're led back to the dungeon, making your way down another set of stone steps. Once inside, the guide explains that the plantation's slaves were lowered into the dungeon by ropes and set down in what are now the visitor restrooms. The three slots in the dungeon were the only source of ventilation at the time — and it is indeed difficult to breathe down there. As a grim reminder of just how terrible conditions were for slaves, also on display is a bear trap that was used to snare would-be escapees — horrifically injuring them for life. A replica of a whip that was commonly used to punish them also hangs on one of the dungeon's stone walls.

But perhaps the creepiest area of Rose Hall lies outside of the house, there you'll find Annie's tomb, marked with the scratchings of schoolchildren. Annie was originally buried in a simple grave by an overseer, but her bones were found in the early 1970s. In 1978, psychics from Haiti journeyed to the gravesite to contact her spirit. They painted white crosses on the headstone to trap her, but, unable to make contact with her ghost, and unsure of where exactly she was, only three out of four crosses could be painted. The absent cross allegedly allows her spirit to roam in and out of her tomb. This is the last stop on the tour, and before it ends, the guide finishes by singing the "Ballad of Annie Palmer," an eerie ode written by Cash.

It's remarkable to see the difference between Rose Hall's elegance today, and its ruined state that lasted over a century. But don't let the decadence give you a false sense of security. Lurking just beyond the next room may well be the White Witch.

The Rose Hall Great House is open year-round between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. daily. Admission prices are \$20 US for adults and \$10 US for children under twelve. More information can be found at rosehall.com.



The Lair Of The White Witch: (clockwise from top) Annie Palmer's tomb, the stone well down to the dungeon, the replica of the upper balcony, Annie's bedroom where she was eventually killed, and (opposite) the imposing front entrance to Rose Hall

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THE GORE MET

CHILDREN OF THE CHAINSAW

The column you are about to read is an account of the tragedy that befell Tobe Hooper, his villain Leatherface and the various creatives behind 1974's *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. It is all the more tragic because they were original. Hooper could not have expected, nor would he likely have wished to see, so many of his mad and macabre musings from TCM blatantly copied by other directors for their own films. Regardless, paying homage to a classic doesn't automatically make a film cringe-worthy; let's take a quick survey of some of the more accomplished recent DVD releases that owe everything from a debt of gratitude to a cut of their retail sales to Hooper and co-writer Kim Henkel.

Headcheese-ing up the list is Kristi Rutty's *Psycho Holocaust* (2009), available on DVD from Independent Entertainment. Rutty follows the TCM template of twentysomethings who take a road trip to a remote backwoods locale, ignore warnings, and fall into the clutches of a crazed cannibal clan, including one Leatherface. Actually, the

chainsaw-wielding masked maniac here is called Pillowface and, as you may have guessed, this isn't an overly serious take on the Hooper/Henkel mythos. The fun includes spotting Giallo references (i.e., the wicked score by Giallo's *Fiemme*, and plenty of '80s-style shot-on-video splatter, including a gory scalping, sundry acts of dismemberment and some strap-on saw blade sodomy!

Then there's *Bunnyman* (2009), which boasts a completely ridiculous concept: the principal villain is a relentless, silent stalker in an Easter parade costume! But director Carl Lindbergh portrays the character humorlessly, crafting an absurdly creepy and instantly



B.A. Dea Fells

iconic slasher. Three couples driving through the remote California wilderness become embroiled in a cat-and-mouse game with an imposing dump truck, à la *Duel* (1971), and are run off the highway. They set out on foot after one of them is killed and their car is wrecked, and it isn't long before they're running for their lives from the titular chainsaw-

leaner version, for which Carrer trimmed eight minutes to ratchet up the pace.

Although the least gory of the lot—the garden shears impalement and disembowelment scenes that bookend the film are the only gags of note—it's the most disturbing. A brother and sister each bring along a friend on a cross-country road trip

to a family reunion on the East Coast. They pull off the highway to camp, but are dragged off into the night by a number of silent, stocking-masked assailants to be cruelly tormented and slaughtered. Convincingly emulating a '70s film, Carrer went the grindhouse route visually as well (including faux sploos, damaged reel ends and colour bleed), and the approach complements the psychedelic cinematography and organic rock tunes of the soundtrack. The story, though, has more

in common with recent French films such as *As* (2006) and *Martyrs* (2008). The motiveless violence that the mysterious mob of Millers inflicts upon their captives is especially uncomfortable—the actors really beat each other! And just as in the famous dinner scene in Hooper's film, the hysteria is genuine.



BUNNYMAN



But the Golden Saw Award of this column must go to Canuck filmmaker Philip Carrer's gritty grindhouse throwback *A Tree Falls* (2010). Carrer made the feature film for \$1000 and went on to premiere it at Montreal's prestigious Fantasia Film Festival. No mean feat! The new extras-jammed Black Fawn Productions/MKD Cinema DVD features a

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REVIEWS BY MARK R. HASAN, THE GORE-MET, AARON VAN LUPTON, GEORGE PACHECO AND TREVOR TUNINSKI



BLACK SUNDAY

Les Baxter

KUTTERBLAND

Les Baxter's complete 51-minute score is pretty much the only vehicle through which one can experience the shorter American version of Mario Bava's elegant 1960 shocker. AP's habit of rescoring and re-dubbing Italian imports may have rendered their new product more palatable for the teen drive-in crowd, but Roberto Nicolosi's moodier and even-tempered scoring style was a better fit for Bava's carefully rendered Gothic chiller. Baxter's caffeinated approach did provide a sonic bridge for horror fans weaned on Universal-style heavy brass, dissonant strings and eerie organ chords, but perhaps the only aspect that really served the film (besides hastening the pacing) is the central theme, when played on strings. Baxter could work wonders when being minimal and deconstructing his sharply drawn melodies, but he wouldn't find the right blend until the Poe films, when he truly blossomed as an inventive genre composer. **MRH** ★★★



HEARTLESS

David Julian

SCREAMWORKS/MoveScore: M30A

David Julian returns to horror with a gentler work that seems more focused on the internal emotional conflicts of the lead character than the demons he believes are running amok on the streets of London. Similarly structured to his masterwork, *The Descent*, Julian

builds the score around a gentle melancholy theme (heard in the opening track), which is retextured in brief chamber versions, but never fully matures. The lack of any thematic resolution within the score allows him to musically drift between plains of calmness, best described as ephemerally soothing, but they mostly allude to a danger looming in the distance—fore-shadowed by ambient percussion and undulating chords with grungy metallic reverberations and scraping. Distant metal tapping and light percussive textures are also part of the mix, with just a handful of genuine action cues breaking up the moodiness. Though subtle, a second listen warns one to Julian's careful sound design and slow portent of an emotional apocalypse. **MRH** ★★.5



THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI

Hobgoblin

NOCTURNE FIRE RECORDINGS

After giving *Nocturnal* a new score in 2010, Shephon Taylor, the mastermind behind the prog-rock band Hobgoblin, aims his sights on *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*. The score's main anchor, tied to the dream element, is reflected by a vaguely Middle Eastern, semi-tragic theme that's essentially an unresolved lament. Variations include the opening thrash metal version, one featuring waves of breathing electric guitar clusters, and several eerie rambles where the repeated theme cycles through contrasting moods (such as the sudden switch from solo keyboards to percussive synths and heavy electronics). Whether the music works for the film is up to the viewer, but as a album inspired by the film, this is a laudable (and fun) effort, in which whims and styles are recombined or smashed together (most notably in the finale, "Caligari Resurrected"), while the spirit of Caligari is ever-present. **MRH** ★★.5



HEXENTANZ

Nekrocratte

AGORIA

Way back in *AM#43*, we published a feature on this Ashburn, Virginia-based artist collective (their moniker is German for "witch dance"), whose 2004 debut *Nekrocratte* exemplified what a black metal band would sound like if it didn't actually play metal. While sharing the same visual and atmospheric aesthetic as bands such as Bathory and Burzum, Hexentanz proved it could inspire nightmares with eleven tracks of unholy, organic and utterly pitch-black ritual music. Previously out-of-print, Agoria has re-released this terrifying gem based around the witches' Sabbat (satanic midnight gatherings during the Middle Ages), which uses spooky sound effects, period instruments, human bones (!) and medieval chants to create a soundtrack for occult offerings and tribal ritual dances. This is no simple horror gimmick, though; the band

clearly takes its theology very seriously, as evidenced by the historical and philosophical treatises included with the album's liner notes. Take it from us, a journey on the left-hand path has never sounded this good or this scary. **AVL** ★★★★★



EVE HELL & THE RAZORS

When the Lights Go Out

HELL RECORDS

After plucking through surfiably instrumental opener "Pick Dust," Calgary singer/bassist Eve Hell's commanding, full-throated vocals take centre stage on her second album, channeling *To Bring You My Love* era-PJ Harvey on the title track with a swoon-inducing vibrato that could cause grown men to bashfully look at the dirt. From there she leads guitarist Mike Hell and drummer Richie Ranchero through fifteen spirited cuts, including a raucous cover of Johnny Cash's "Big River," the frenzied rockabilly workout "Upstuck on My Microphone" (not to mention blood on her

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STAKE LAND

Jeff Grace

SCREAMWORKS

Having previously scored *The Last Winter* and *House of the Devil*, Jeff Grace is Glass Eye Pix's go-to guy once more for the score to Jim Mickle's post-apocalyptic vampire road movie. Upon a rich, orchestral foundation trimmed with violin, gently strummed acoustic guitar, fiddle and plains, Grace taps into the same haunting undercurrent as the music for TV's *Deadwood* does, which makes sense given *Stake Land* is steeped in its own antiquated sense of rustic Americana. There are overwhelmingly beautiful moments among the 26 tracks, including the stately "Main Theme," the simmering pot of moaning strings, timpani and a cello that seems to bend eerily in the breeze in "The Brotherhood," the dramatic bluster of "Nothing Out There," the scurrying strings of "Ram Attack," and the intermittent sustained notes from a South African vuvuzela horn throughout, which signal the vampires' attack. It's hard to imagine the film's well-drawn characters binding against anything less than Grace's masterful compositions in their cross-country bid to survive. **TT** ★★★★★



the BLOOD SPATTERED GUIDE

THE RIOT ACT



"We're Not Gonna Take It"
— TWISTED SISTER

If you read my column on my problems with death metal in *RMW110*, you may recall that I am constantly questioning what exactly makes music horrific. Because unlike films and books, there really is no distinct "horror music" genre. Yes, there are a few acts — Alice Cooper, Misfits, Skinny Puppy — that have blatantly adopted horror themes throughout their work to be considered icons of the genre. For me, though, equality of interest are artists who create unsettling, scary sounds, whether or not they ever mention a monster.

Atan Tenege Riot has been producing audio horrors since 1992. The Berlin-based group describes itself as "digital hardcore" — combining the pulse of techno with the politics of punk in an intense mix of guitar riffs and electronic noise as abrasive as it is anarchistic. Leader/Alec Empire is a prolific DJ, composer and remixer (Rammstein, Björk, etc.) who believes music is a weapon and wields it for maximum revolutionary impact, with songs such as "Deutschland Has Gotta Die" and "Destroy 2000 Years of Culture." Last year, ATR produced an iPhone app with a feature called Rotasounds Produce Riots, designed to induce "very low sub basses, square waves, noise sounds which trigger hysteria and panic within the audience." (Apple was not pleased.)

The group's latest release, *Is This Hypocrite?*, is a cyberpunk record Empire has called "a nightmare vision of the future." The lead single "Blood in My Eyes" is a punishing kind of pop song about human trafficking. When Nic Endo sings of mutilations and screams, "So much blood! Too much blood!" she is aiming her rage squarely at the governments that fail to prevent sexual exploitation, but the group's biggest cause of late is the greed of technological freedoms, and the record blasts out critiques of authorities' increasing control of the internet. This is 21st-century protest music, and with its relentless speed rhythms and shocking sloganeering about the collapse of history, it's the group's most fully realized dystopian odyssey yet. Because the reality is that truth is scarier than fiction. Sometimes producing a great work of horror takes more guts than fake blood.

LENA LARSEN

bass), the breathy torch song "Zombie Love" (its catchy refrain professing, "I love you so much, I want to eat you alive"), before finishing up with a suitably sultry version of Tito & Tarantula's "After Dark" and a full-throttle rendition of AC/DC's "Rocker." Eve Hell may be a bad girl but she's clearly done a little time in rock 'n' roll heaven. TT 3.5/5



THE BLACK DAHLIA MURDER

Ritual

METAL BLADE

Whether it's the Gothenburg paganism of their *Unhallowed* debut, the metal-core of *Masque* or the black/death prostration of *Nocturnal*, The Black Dahlia Murder seems to possess a knack for aping whatever's popular. This time it's the occultism of traditional doom, particularly with this fifth effort's admirably badass cover art... and not so badass (hilariously awful, actually) accompanying press photos, which feature the band members draped in robes and engaged in some otherworldly "satanic" ceremony. Musically, *Ritual* is a technically proficient blend of death and black metal, peppered with fewer melodic jobs than usual — In Flames and At the Gates aren't the cash cows they used to be, I guess. Opener "A Shrine to Madness" and "Conspiring with the Damned" marginally display ability and attitude, and yet it's all sort of so profoundly boring, inspiring more head-shakes than head bops. Even vocalist Trevor Strnad's deep, enunciated growls aren't enough to save this band from merely sounding like a lesser product of their collective influences. GP 3.2



DEBAUCHERY

Germany's Next Death Metal
AFM

The title of this album — a take-off on the German counterpart of TV's *Arrested*

ica's *Next Top Model* — may sound rather awkward and stupid but it's also especially accurate given Debauchery's two principle obsessions: hot nude women and buckets of fake blood. On this seventh album, the sound remains the same: Six Feet Under-style death metal (mostly because Thomas Gurrath's guttural growl sounds just like Chris Barnes' vocals) and groovy hard rock. Lyrically, it sticks to mindless gore and violence on tracks such as "Zombie Blitzkrieg" and "Death Will Entertain," but a rebellious punk attitude lurks beneath, serving as a raised middle finger to those who criticize Debauchery for being the entertainingly offensive unit that they are. Suitably, there's a cover of Alice Cooper's "School's Out," in tribute to Gurrath's recent firing from his teaching job after his employers discovered how he spends his nights. If death metal is allowed to have party records, this is the best contender I've heard yet. AVL 3.5/5



HAEMORRHAGE

Hospital Carcass

RELAPSE

This blood-spattered (literally!) Spanish quintet has been aping Carcass-inspired goregrind since 1990, *Hospital Carcass* being its sixth full-length. Unlike the band's more modern peers, which tend to offer a near-impenetrable musical mass of down-tuned technical riffs, blast beats and gurgling vocals, Haemorrhage has crafted a collection of evil yet accessible hospital-themed tracks. With song titles such as "Open Heart Butchery," "Traumageddon" and "Tumour Donor," it's well-evident that the band has its tongue firmly planted in cheek, but the goofiness ends with their image and lyrics. Musically, the group incorporates the genre-standard mid-range shriek and growly dual vocal style it helped define with catchy riffs and galloping tempos that make for some serious headbanging. It's remarkable that a band that has toiled in relative obscurity for as long as Haemorrhage has can produce a platter of splatter that is as much fun to listen to as it must have been to make. GM 3.5/5

CALIFORNIA CARNAGE KINGS **EXHUMED** RE-EMERGE AFTER FIVE YEARS
IN THE GRAVE WITH AN ALBUM THAT LIVES UP TO ITS TITLE: *ALL GUTS, NO GLORY*.

SHAKE OFF
THE

DEAD

BY THE
CORE-MET

SOMETIMES THEY COME BACK. LEGENDARY DEATH METAL BANDS **EXHUMED** RE-EMERGE AFTER FIVE YEARS
AND THEY'VE ALL TUNED **EXHUMED** MATERIAL TO BRAY ACCLAIM. NEW **EXHUMED** HAVE
BACK TO **EXHUMED** TOO, BUT THEY'RE NOT RESTING ON THEIR LAURELS.

Inspired after seeing aforementioned seminal British grind innovators Carcass – the first band to set medical dictionaries to music – lead vocalist/guitarist Matt Harvey formed Exhumed in 1991 at the tender age of fifteen. The band played shows but recorded only a small number of demos and splits (so its members could finish their educations) before releasing their aptly titled debut full-length *Gore Metal* in 1998. *Slaughtercult* followed in 2000, and *Anatomy Is Destiny* in 2003. But by 2005, Harvey was ground down by the business of running a band and put Exhumed on ice.

"I was really burnt on the whole thing," he explains. "So many different lineup changes, and it kind of seemed like we were still basically in the same place we were after the first record. I got away as far as I could. I actually ended up living in Hawaii for a year and a half."

After becoming disenchanted with life in the Aloha State, Harvey made plans to return to California in 2010 and reconnected with the last incarnation of the group – second guitarist Wes Coley, bassist and low vocalist Leon del Muerte and drummer Danny Walker. Songs came together quickly though tests and ensnare, and by the time Harvey returned to the mainland they were ready to record a new album.

"It was almost like peeling the scab off a wound," jokes Harvey. "Once we started going, we just kept coming out with more and more shit. We had 22 songs in the space of five months. The vibe was really good, it felt natural."

Let it be known, there is no dust on Exhumed. *Listening to All Guts, No Glory* (released last month on Relapse Records), it's hard to believe the band was ever gone. A logical progression from *Anatomy Is Destiny*, the new album is arguably the group's finest work to date: it blasts as furiously as anything they've recorded and is full of bursting with catchy, high-velocity riffs, dual lead work and righteous shredding.

"We tried to make the songs a little bit leaner than the ones on *Anatomy*, cutting the excessive arrangements and lyrics but still retaining the melodic stuff," says Harvey. "Wes and I are both firmly rooted in the rock school. I'm totally into [Deep Purple and Rainbow guitarist] Ritchie Blackmore, he's totally into Van Halen, and we're both huge Thin Lizzy fans, so that's going to come out."

The lyrics and imagery associated with Exhumed have always been darker than those influences would suggest, however, opting for a tongue-in-cheek, splatter movie sensibility. The cover of *All Guts* – featuring the band members in makeup by effects artist Caleb Schneider (*The Walking Dead* – and new tracks such as "Your Funeral, My Feast," "Dis-assembly Line," and "So Let It Be Rotten... So Let It Be Done" certainly continue that tradition, but Harvey has a confession to make: he's not a rabid horror fan.

"It's kind of funny – when I was younger, I definitely was. And I still love the classics, but horror movies aren't something I seek out these days," he admits. "The *Gates of Hell*, *Dead Alive*, *Evil Dead II* – the '80s stuff is the horror I like. I still dig *Re-Animator*, *Phantom* and all that stuff, but I don't track down new horror movies. It's ironic, because writing gory lyrics is a bit more challenging now than it was when I was thirteen or twenty!"

Living up to the album title, Relapse is giving *All Guts, No Glory* a big push. In addition to the CD release, the label has issued a mail-order exclusive two-disc set containing bonus tracks, and a double vinyl fold-out with red-coloured records shaped like saw blades. With mini-tours booked for the rest of the summer in the US, Mexico and Canada, and select festival dates in Europe, Harvey has one ambition.

"We just want to play some shows and have fun," he insists. "The goals that we had before are part of the reason why we stopped playing. I just want to enjoy it – keep it fun, keep it loose. As long as people are going to keep offering us decent money to come to their town, we're going to keep doing it."



PLAY DEAD

NOW PLAYING > F.E.A.R. 3: ALICE: MADNESS RETURNS, SHADOWS OF THE DAMNED, ARMY OF DARKNESS DEFENSE



F.E.A.R. 3

PC, PS3, Xbox 360
100 Games

It's been six years since the last installment in the *F.E.A.R.* franchise, which is centred around a creepy little girl named

Alma whose arsenal of scary psychic powers have made a lot of gamers lose sleep at night. But *F.E.A.R. 3*, featuring a storyline penned by horror legends John Carpenter and Steve Niles, takes us right back to the end of the previous outing, with Alma all grown up, very pregnant and incredibly pissed off.

Players once again take on the persona of the Point Man – a genetically enhanced super-soldier who makes *Halo's* Master Chief look like a smirking schoolgirl – whose mission is to find and kill Alma before she gives birth to her little bastard.

Though it works incredibly well as a single-player, first-person shooter, if you get too scared to go it alone you can always tap a buddy to go co-op with you as the ethereal Paxton Fettel (Point Man's brother who was killed back in the original title). And whereas your arsenal mostly consists of conventional weaponry, such as shotguns and machine guns, because Paxton is a ghost he doesn't have such restrictions. You'll be able to utilize his gruesome supernatural abilities to possess the bodies of enemies and fire psychic blasts that'll liquify them

into a chunky red mist. (Paxton is also playable in single-player mode after you've completed the stage as Point Man.)

Though the graphics seem dated at times, it's made up for in spurring blood, of which you'll see bucketloads as you confront wave after wave of smart, scary enemies in close-quarters combat. You'll also venture out into the open expanse of a ruined city, where you can climb into a mech-

anized suit of armour and swat helicopter gunships out of the sky.

Makes no mistake about it, this is a really scary game replete with an understated, unnerving soundtrack that ratchets the tension up so high that you'll find yourself unloading clips of ammo into empty shadows just because you were certain that something was hiding there waiting to pounce on you.

And don't be surprised if you find yourself sleeping with the lights on, a weapon under your pillow and one eye open after playing.

ANDREW LEE



ALICE: MADNESS RETURNS

Xbox 360, PS3, PC
EA

If you've been wondering what lies down the rabbit hole, now we know lots of jumping. *Alice: Madness Returns*, the sequel to 2000's American McGee's *Alice*, is a tried-and-true platformer at heart, with precision leaping factoring largely into every absolutely gorgeous level.

The game's storyline features a slightly older Alice who's still trying to uncover what happened the night her family died. The stakes are raised even further by the evil Ruin and a (literal) train of corruption that is racing through Wonderland, turning whimsy and beauty into malevolence and devastation. As Alice, you must get to the root of what's behind the Ruin by traversing through Wonderland's many unusual regions, from the distressed steam-punk platform and factories of the Hatter's Domain to the blood-spattered, corpse-strewn subterranean caves of the Vale of Doom.

Jumping isn't the only precision element to *Madness Returns* either; pretty much everything requires careful care and attention, from skulking out lost memories and hidden loot (to upgrade your character and weapons), to navigating the niddle-filled world and fighting enemies.



REMARKS: IMMERSIVE SOUNDTRACK AND SOUND DESIGN, STELLAR GRAPHICS
MURDER-VISUAL GUILCHES, INCREDIBLY ADDICTIVE SYSTEM

Yes, even battle is a puzzle. You have four weapons – Vorpal Blade for quick melee attacks, Hobby Horse for strong ones, Pepper Grinder for fire power and an acid bomb-lobbing Teapot – but most enemies (and all bosses) require a particular weapon or weapon combo to be killed. This can get a little intense when you're facing a mob of monsters (black seeping masses with doll appendages, fire-spewing wasps and sharp-clawed mutant crabs, among them) that all need to be dispatched in different ways and in a very particular order. And no, button-mashing won't work.

Even if platforming isn't your favourite style of gameplay, the top-notch artwork – which feels like a cross between *Alice in Wonderland* (from which it takes direct inspiration) and Terry Gilliam's *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen* – makes it exhilarating to progress through nonetheless. Sadly, the game suffers from some visual glitches, an autosave system that is woefully inconsistent (sometimes respawning you near your point of death, other times taking you back to the beginning of an area), and a strict linear progression that hampers its replay value. Ultimately, minor quibbles, and certainly nothing that should dissuade you from answering the call of the Cheshire Cat.

MONICA S. NUELDER



SHADOWS OF THE DAMNED

PS3, Xbox 360

EA

You gotta love a game with a warning label that states it contains blood and gore, intense violence, nudity, sexual themes and strong language — but finding out that it's directed by the same guys responsible for *No More Heroes* and *Resident Evil 4* is the bloody icing on the grue-soaked cake!

Take control of foul-mouthed Mexican mercenary and professional demon hunter Garcia Hotspur, as he plunges into the depths of hell in search of his girlfriend, who's been taken prisoner by a malevolent Demon Lord.

Luckily, you don't have to go it alone; you are accompanied by a floating demon head named Johnson, who acts as Garcia's constant companion and spouts more vulgarity than Don Rickles at a truck stop. But he can also transform into a motorcycle, a light source and a number of weapons, including a pistol that Garcia affectionately refers to as his Boner.

Trekking across the strikingly rendered, darkly gothic landscapes of hell, you'll face a vast array of obstacles and enemies that seem as if they've been culled from your worst nightmares, including doors locked with demonic pubic hair and a hulking, machete-wielding undead boss who's persistent enough to chase you through several debris-strewn locales if you run from him. Suffice to say, it's all particularly nasty and full of juvenile potty-humor hijinks, but your kills do earn you some desecrated gemstones that can be traded in for weapon enhancements and health boosts.

The soundtrack is an astonishingly nerdy effort that comes courtesy of Akira Yamaoka (*Silent*



Hill). The voice work is pleasingly cheesy and sleazy, featuring more dick jokes and F-bombs than any other title out there. And the entire game is a welcome blend of action and humor, as Garcia alternately bribes demons with strawberries or shreds them into messy piles of goop while spouting lines that are lewd, crude and always rude.

So grab your Boner and get ready to spray hot carnage all over your enemies with a game that'll have you on your knees begging for more!

ANDREW LEE



HEADLINES: EXCELLENT GRAPHICS, GRUESOME KILLS, WILDERNESS DANCEABLE
WISDOM: TOO FEW SAVE CHECKPOINTS



ARMY OF DARKNESS: DEFENSE

iPhone, iPad, iPod Touch

BackFlip Studios

B-movie behemoth *Army of Darkness* has been mined several times by the video game world with varying degrees of success, but this latest offering from BackFlip Studios is the only

title that truly captures the spirit of the film and reliably translates the larger-than-life antics of Bruce Campbell, as Ash, into a fun, hyper-addictive game.

You play the big-chinned one as he tries to prevent an army of deadies from storming the castle and stealing the Necronomicon. This side-scroller/tower defense mash-up allows you to both press forward and retreat while waging a furious battle with the inbound baddies. There are several powerful bonuses to help you crush the evil dead, including Ash's signature "Boometick" and the "Deathoaster," the latter of which rolls in to annihilate particularly stubborn foes. There are also military units such as pikemen, swordsmen, archers and heroes (namely King Arthur and Duke Henry the Red) that you can call in to fight at your side.

Army of Darkness: Defense features a ton of quotes from the movie, and the film's soundtrack music plays as you battle through the game's 50 levels (upon completion, an endless



mode is unlocked). All in all, it's an extremely difficult title to put down, especially with Ash crooning "Come get some" as you bash another skeleton to smithereens. Which really isn't so bad, unless you have to work for a living, like me.

GRANTON DENTZ



HEADLINES: USES ACTUAL QUOTES AND MUSIC FROM THE FILM, VALUE PRICED
WISDOM: COULD USE MORE LEVELS (AND A SIBBLET)



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CLASSIC CUT

MAN-THING

ROY THOMAS AND GERRY CONWAY. USA • 1971



"For whatever knows fear, burns at the Man-Thing's touch." And thus, with a simple yet ominous tagline, was the foundation laid for a simple creature in a decidedly less-than-sample, highly influential comic book.

Riding a wave of resurgent interest in macabre comics (horror-themed titles had been all but snuffed out in the 1950s, mostly via self-censorship), Roy Thomas and Gerry Conway's chronicle about an experimental scientist who drowns in a bog in the Florida Everglades, only to fuse with it and re-emerge as a hideous, hulking, muck-encrusted, plant-based swamp creature, soared onto newsstand shelves in May 1971 and the non-bog world has not been the same since.

At a time when comics were almost never viewed as art and were seldom seen as a legitimate arm of popular culture (much less as a vehicle for conveying deep ideas), *Man-Thing*, and in particular Steve Gerber's visionary three-year run at the helm, conveniently took this mainstream comic into a more adult and literary realm long before the term "graphic novel" had ever been conceived. One didn't often open a 29-cent comic book to read:

"The emotional current crackling in the air between Andrea and her mother proves too much for Man-Thing's empathic nature. He takes his leave, having understood every syllable yet intimately aware of certain resonances, nuances, which neither woman dares discern or acknowledge. Pity the poor soul-dweller, who cannot rationalize, or conceptualize, or keep his clinical distance. Distressing as their convoluted emotions may be to contemplate, they are worse by far to feel."

Alongside inserting full pages of text, actual short stories, and famously closing the series with a meta-narrative in which he writes himself into the storyline claiming that he'd simply been recounting actual events, Gerber also examined issues such as suicide, insanity, spousal abuse, murder, racism, environmental exploitation and Aboriginal land rights long before it became fashionable to do so.

Unlike most comics, in which no one ever seemed to freakin' die, many people died in *Man-Thing*. As in life, there was often an ambiguous morality to the proceedings; prices were routinely paid — even by innocent people. Although usually a force for good, as long as you felt fear in its presence, the Man-Thing's burning touch was not above — nor below — disfiguring a beautiful face.

Making all of Gerber's exquisite work doubly impressive was the fact

that the main character never once suffered so much as a single word.

Conventional wisdom has it that *Man-Thing* was Marvel Comics' attempt to piggyback on the success of DC Comics' own malformed monstrosity, Swamp Thing (another tale about a star-crossed scientist who fuses with a murky marsh only to re-emerge as a hideous, hulking, muck-encrusted, plant-based swamp creature). However, the very *Man-Thing* debuted a full two months before Swampy did. And while both brutes shared rather uncomfortable similarities, Marvel resisted pursuing any legal action, as the two beasts had obviously borrowed heavily from — if not owed their entire existence to — a 1940s Avon Comics character called The Heep, which just so happened to be a hideous, hulking, muck-encrusted, plant-based swamp creature that had built up around the remains of a drowned fighter pilot. Interestingly, The Heep was itself most likely based on "It," Theodore Sturgeon's seminal short story (that Ray Bradbury deemed "one of the finest weird tales in the genre"), written around 1940 about a... well, you guessed it. Curiously, Marvel also published a comic book adaptation of Sturgeon's tale in December 1972, that due to the protagonist's somewhat striking resemblance to *Man-Thing*, later transmogrified into a series called *It! The Living Colossus*.

Aside from influencing icons such as author Neil Gaiman (*The Sandman*, *The Graveyard Book*), who wrote that Gerber was one of the three people who made him want to write comics, it's also arguable that without *Man-Thing* the comics industry might not have been as open to the inspirations that Alan Moore (*Fear Itself*, *V for Vendetta*, *Watchmen*) had to offer in the pages of Swamp Thing more than a decade later. *Man-Thing*'s gnarly roots have since spread into a 2005 straight-to-video eponymous film, collectibles, video games, and he continues to appear in comics titles such as *Tomb of Fear*, *Monsters Unleashed*, *Super Hero Squad* and *Marvel Zombies*. His enduring influence can also be seen in other trashy comics characters such as The Sludge, Bog Swamp Demon, Muck-Men and a new Heep.

Enclosed by mainstream titles that were generally overly melodramatic, naïve and anodyne, somewhat tasteless, lacking in merit and/or cliché-ridden, *Man-Thing* consistently proved that it isn't the medium, but the quality of perception and expression, that determines the significance of an artistic endeavour.

MICHAEL MITCHELL



Release the Beast



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